

Agenda

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 30 July 2026**

Time: **1.30 pm**

Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

Samantha Gregory, Democratic Services Officer

Tel: (01432) 260176

Email: samantha.gregory@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Samantha Gregory, Democratic Services Officer on (01432) 260176 or e-mail samantha.gregory@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council
	Councillor Graham Biggs
	Councillor Harry Bramer
	Councillor Barry Durkin
	Councillor Carole Gandy
	Councillor Dan Hurcomb
	Councillor Ivan Powell
	Councillor Philip Price
	Councillor Pete Stoddart

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests in respect of Table A, Table B or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026.	11 - 28
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS <i>The deadline for submission of questions for this meeting is:</i> <i>5pm on 24th July 2026.</i> <i>Questions can be submitted via the Online questions portal Further information and guidance is available at Get involved - Herefordshire Council</i> <i>Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting.</i> <i>Full details about asking questions and the deadlines at public meetings can be found here: constitution of the council.</i>	
4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive questions from members of the public.	
5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS To receive questions from councillors.	
6. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES To receive reports from the Council's scrutiny committees on any recommendations to the Cabinet arising from recent scrutiny committee meetings. <i>Report from Scrutiny Management Board: The CQC inspection report and the council's action plan in response</i>	29 - 32
7. CQC ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN That Cabinet approves Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan 2026-2027	33 - 58
8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES STATUTORY DIRECTION Cabinet note the improvement made in Children's Services and the positive report completed by the DFE appointed commissioner and note the formal	59 - 88

lifting of the statutory direction placed on Children's Services.

9. BIG ECONOMIC PLAN

89 - 152

To consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan

10. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE PROGRESS REVIEW

153 - 196

To receive the report on the outcome of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review, held on 28 May 2026, and to endorse the continued delivery of the council's action plan in response to the original recommendations.

11. HEREFORDSHIRE PARKING STRATEGY 2026 - 2041

197 - 266

That the new Parking Strategy for Herefordshire is adopted by cabinet

In the opinion of the Proper Officer, **Appendix B** of the following item will not be, or is likely not to be, open to the public and press at the time it is considered.

RECOMMENDATION: 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, as indicated below and it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

12. FOOD WASTE COLLECTION IMPLEMENTATION

267 - 314

Following the successful award and mobilisation of the new recyclables and waste collection service, Cabinet resolved to approve the introduction of the new food waste collections scheme in May 2025. This report recommends the optimal approach to implementing this scheme and sets out the rationale for this recommendation against other potential options.

The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings

Please take time to read the latest guidance on the council website by following the link at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings and support us in promoting a safe environment for everyone. If you have any queries please contact the Governance Support Team on 01432 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

You have a right to:

- Attend all Council, Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all Councillors with details of the membership of Cabinet and of all Committees and Sub-Committees. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees and to inspect and copy documents.

Recording of meetings

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

The council may make a recording of this public meeting or stream it live to the council's website. Such recordings form part of the record of the meeting and are made available for members of the public via the council's web-site.

Public transport links

The Herefordshire Council office at Plough Lane is located off Whitecross Road in Hereford, approximately 1 kilometre from the City Bus Station.

The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/herford-city-bus-map-local-services->

Guide to Cabinet

The Executive or Cabinet of the Herefordshire Council consists of a Leader and Deputy Leader and eight other Cabinet Members each with their own individual programme area responsibilities. The current Cabinet membership is:

Cllr Jonathan Lester (Leader)	Corporate Strategy and Budget
Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst (Deputy Leader)	Environment and Culture
Cllr Ivan Powell	Children and Young People
Cllr Harry Bramer	Community Services and Assets
Cllr Pete Stoddart	Finance and Corporate Services
Cllr Carole Gandy	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Graham Biggs	Economy and Growth
Cllr Barry Durkin	Roads and Regulatory Services
Cllr Philip Price	Transport and Infrastructure
Cllr Dan Hurcomb	Local Engagement and Community Resilience

The Cabinet's roles are:

- To consider the overall management and direction of the Council. Directed by the Leader of the Council, it will work with senior managers to ensure the policies of Herefordshire are clear and carried through effectively;
- To propose to Council a strategic policy framework and individual strategic policies;
- To identify priorities and recommend them to Council;
- To propose to Council the Council's budget and levels of Council Tax;
- To give guidance in relation to: policy co-ordination; implementation of policy; management of the Council; senior employees in relation to day to day implementation issues;
- To receive reports from Cabinet Members on significant matters requiring consideration and proposals for new or amended policies and initiatives;
- To consider and determine policy issues within the policy framework covering more than one programme area and issues relating to the implementation of the outcomes of monitoring reviews.

Who attends cabinet meetings?

- Members of the cabinet, including the leader of the council and deputy leader – these are the decision makers, only members of the cabinet can vote on recommendations put to the meeting.
- Officers of the council – attend to present reports and give technical advice to cabinet members
- Chairpersons of scrutiny committees – attend to present the views of their committee if it has considered the item under discussion

-
- Political group leaders attend to present the views of their political group on the item under discussion. Other councillors may also attend as observers but are not entitled to take part in the discussion.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Herefordshire Council

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 25 June 2026 at 2.30 pm

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:	Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson) Councillors Graham Biggs, Barry Durkin, Carole Gandy, Dan Hurcomb, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart
Cabinet Members in remote attendance	None <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 Hitchiner (substitute for Cllr Harvey and online), Simmons (online), Proctor (substitute for Cllr James and online). Councillor Davies attended for the Risk Management Update Quarter 4 2025-26 item only

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance	Councillors Stark (online), Councillor Fagan (online)

Officers in attendance:	H Hall, J Hobbs, C Porter, R Sanders and P Walker S Gregory (secretary) and M Evans (democratic services)

OPENING REMARKS

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Paul Walker at his final Cabinet meeting, recognising his significant contribution to Herefordshire Council over the past five years. It was noted that Paul had undertaken his role diligently and prudently and had recently been involved in a number of public appearances and speeches ahead of his departure.

The Leader highlighted the scale of Paul's achievements and contribution to both the Council and the county, acknowledging his role in supporting Cabinet and Full Council decision-making and helping the authority grow from strength to strength. Particular recognition was given to Paul's determination, skill and ambition for Herefordshire.

On behalf of the Cabinet and all 53 councillors, the Leader expressed sincere thanks for Paul's service and dedication.

Group Leaders (or their representatives) were invited to offer their own tributes, after which Paul was invited to make some closing remarks.

Councillor Hitchiner paid tribute to Paul's leadership and contribution to the Council, referencing the principle that organisational culture is key to success. He noted that Paul was leaving the Council with a much stronger and more positive organisational culture than when he arrived, where staff enjoy working and feel able to make a difference.

Councillor Hitchiner attributed this improvement in part to the leadership demonstrated by Paul during his time at the Council. He thanked Paul for his commitment and service, wished him a happy retirement, and expressed appreciation for the significant contribution he had made to the authority.

Councillor Simmons expressed the Group's gratitude to Paul for his leadership and support during a period of administrative change. She thanked him for the assistance he had provided to officers, Members, the public and stakeholder groups, noting that his positive impact and commitment had been evident from the time he joined the Council.

Councillor Proctor expressed the Group's gratitude for Paul's service and leadership. He described Paul as consistently professional, with a strong understanding of and respect for the democratic process and noted that he had provided impartial advice and support to all Members and political groups. Councillor Proctor remarked that Paul should be proud of the positive impact his leadership had made on the Council and the residents of Herefordshire and wished him well in his retirement.

Paul Walker thanked Members for their support and reflected on the importance of local democracy and public service. He noted the valuable role elected Members play in supporting their communities across all political groups and emphasised that the Council's achievements had been made possible through the combined leadership of Members and officers.

He highlighted improvements made during his tenure, including a stronger financial position, transformed children's services, improved performance of key services, and progress in growth and regeneration. Paul thanked Members for both their support and constructive challenge, describing it as a privilege to have served as Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council.

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Bramer and Powell

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

98. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

99. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 11 - 16)

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

100. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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

101. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

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

102. Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Councillor Stoddart, cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

Cabinet received a report on progress against the Council Plan 2024-2028 and Delivery Plan 2025/26. Members noted that 184 of 255 milestones had been completed during

the year, representing a 72% delivery rate, with 60 milestones to be carried forward into 2026/27 and 11 discontinued.

Progress was reported across the Council's capital programme, including the Hereford Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road Active Travel Improvements, phosphate mitigation projects, school expansion and maintenance schemes, and improvements to council estate assets.

Under the People theme, Members noted 67 of the 87 milestones were completed, 8 were rolled over 26/27, 8 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and rolled over 26/27 and 4 were discontinued.

Members noted progress in improving early years support and school readiness, successful foster carer recruitment resulting in performance above the national average, strengthened domestic abuse partnership working, co-production of the carers annual report, and the awarding of grants to improve community facilities across the county.

Under the Place theme, Members noted 57 of the 89 milestones were completed 57, 10 were rolled over to 26/27, 19 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 3 milestones had been discontinued.

Progress was noted in community infrastructure programmes, parish-led highways and drainage improvements, River Wye restoration and catchment partnership working, and development of the county's Nature Recovery Strategy, with publication deferred to allow full consideration of consultation responses.

Under the Growth theme, Members noted of the 39 milestones, 27 were completed, 4 were rolled over to 26/27, 4 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 4 milestones had been discontinued.

Members noted progress in delivering affordable housing, including plans for the Merton Meadow and Essex Arms sites, refurbishment of a city-centre property to provide affordable homes, and ongoing work on the Buttercross development in Leominster. While the refurbishment tender had been delayed until April 2027, the additional time would support the development of a well-designed scheme and help ensure high-quality outcomes.

Under the Transformation theme, it was noted 33 of the 41 Milestones were completed, 2 were parked as waiting on other interdependent activity and 5 were rolled over into 26/27.

Members noted strengthened governance arrangements with Hoople Ltd and preparations for review of the Service Level Agreement. The development of a local Outcomes Framework, aligned to the Government's Local Government Outcomes Framework, was also reported, with implementation planned from Quarter 1 2026/27.

Performance against key indicators was reviewed. Positive performance was reported in children's social care assessments, children in care reviews, planning application processing, affordable housing delivery, business grant support and staff sickness levels. Challenges remained in relation to supporting a small cohort of long-term rough sleepers and in maintaining people at home following discharge from hospital.

In conclusion, Cabinet noted the overall delivery rate and the commitment to progress outstanding milestones during 2026/27.

Comments from cabinet members:

Members received an update on the winter night shelter, which operated for 177 nights until April 2026 and provided accommodation for 74 individuals at risk of rough sleeping. The shelter, managed by Care in Communities Partnership supported by other agencies and voluntary organisations, accommodated up to 16 people per night, including emergency pod provision.

All service users received needs assessments and support from a range of partner organisations. Members noted the positive outcomes achieved, with approximately 66% of shelter users moving on to alternative accommodation and no longer rough sleeping. Ongoing support continued for several individuals through outreach services.

Thanks were expressed to the organisations, volunteers and partners who supported the shelter, including those who provided meals, wellbeing support and practical assistance. It was noted that the level of usage demonstrated the ongoing need for the service and the value of the collaborative approach taken.

Members thanked the Public Rights of Way and Flood Risk Management teams for successfully delivering the Parish Council Grant schemes, recognising the value of directing funding to local priorities and community-led projects.

It was also noted that, by the end of the financial year, over 100 miles of road had received resurfacing or surface dressing treatments, representing approximately 5% of the county's highway network. Members recognised this as a significant achievement in the delivery of the highways maintenance programme.

Members noted that construction of the new Peterchurch Primary School was progressing well and remained on schedule for completion in autumn 2026. The new facility was welcomed as a significant investment that would provide enhanced educational provision for Peterchurch, the Golden Valley and the wider surrounding area.

Members noted that the 255 delivery plan milestones should be considered in the context of the Council's responsibility for delivering more than 800 services across a wide range of areas, including highways, children's services, adult social care and support for carers. Recognition and thanks were given to the Council's workforce for their continued commitment and contribution in delivering services for the benefit of the residents of Herefordshire.

Members noted that the awarding and mobilisation of the new Public Realm contract represented a major achievement, involving approximately two years of preparation and significant work across multiple council teams. It was reported that, three weeks into the contract, implementation had progressed smoothly, reflecting the dedication and hard work of officers involved in its delivery.

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Liberal Democrat Group outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Acknowledged the success of the Council's fostering programme, highlighting the approval of 37 new fostering households and the placement of 69% of children in foster care. However, concerns were raised that, while the report demonstrated significant activity, several key projects remained delayed, including alternative education provision, active travel schemes and the development of a new central library.

Concerns were also expressed regarding changes made during the year to the rough sleeping performance indicator and target. It was suggested that performance reporting

should remain clear, consistent and transparent, with any amendments to indicators fully explained to Members to support effective scrutiny and accountability.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

A Member recognised and thanked officers for their work in delivering the Council Plan milestones. While acknowledging progress made during the year, concerns were raised regarding the 60 milestones carried forward into 2026/27, which were considered indicative of delays in areas including homelessness, transport, road safety, commissioning, digital services, climate action, capital projects and support for children with disabilities.

The Member expressed concern that active travel, road safety and bus-related projects had not been prioritised to the same extent as major road schemes and noted that a significant proportion of planned public realm investment in market towns would be carried forward into the next financial year.

Further concerns were raised regarding delays to environmental initiatives, including carbon reduction measures, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and wider environmental strategies. The Member suggested that these delays could have implications for economic growth, health outcomes and inequalities, and called for greater transparency in reporting both achievements and areas where progress had not been made as planned.

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

It was noted that the overall delivery rate of 72.16% was broadly comparable to previous years and suggested that, given the Council's ambition, some milestones were always likely to be carried forward. While acknowledging progress made, the Member expressed disappointment that several major capital projects remained in progress or delayed and hoped to see these completed in the coming year.

The Member congratulated the fostering team on its strong performance and welcomed the increase in foster care placements. They also commented that many of the report's achievements were described qualitatively and suggested that more measurable outcomes would strengthen performance reporting.

Questions were raised regarding governance arrangements with Hoople Ltd, including the timetable for agreeing a new Service Level Agreement. Clarification was also sought on the Local Government Outcomes Framework, including the targets against which performance would be measured.

Concerns were expressed about the increase in residual household waste and the reasons for the variance between forecast and actual affordable housing delivery figures. The Member also queried the revised rough sleeping indicator and sought clarification on its rationale.

The Member noted the length of stay of some users of the winter shelter and suggested this could warrant further examination by Scrutiny to better understand the circumstances involved.

The Administration's achievements were acknowledged but highlighted several areas of concern regarding delayed or undelivered projects.

Concern was expressed that funding allocated to reduce flood risk had been carried forward, and it was requested that this investment be progressed as quickly as possible.

Questions were raised regarding the Southern Link Road Full Business Case, including when it would be available for public and Member consideration, the timetable for Political Group Consultation, and the release of supporting papers. A request was also made for the underlying traffic data to be provided separately and for clarification as to whether the business case would include assessment of induced traffic impacts on the wider road network, including routes through Madley and Clehonger.

Further clarification was sought regarding changes to phosphate permitting arrangements involving Welsh Water and the potential implications for housing development in the north of the county.

Concerns were also raised about highway improvement schemes that had not yet been delivered, with a request that priority be given to progressing these projects.

Finally, concern was expressed about further delays relating to the procurement of a city centre building (John Venn building), with the view that continued delays reflected poorly on the Council.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and argued that:

Did not attend for this item.

In response to the comments made:

It was noted that significant progress had been made across a large number of projects and milestones. While some projects remained in progress and had not yet been completed, this reflected the complexity and timescales involved rather than any lack of commitment.

Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to delivering key projects and addressing longstanding challenges facing the county. It was acknowledged that all Members would wish to see projects delivered as quickly as possible, but that major initiatives require time to implement. Assurance was provided that the administration remained fully committed to progressing and delivering these important projects, with its resolve unchanged.

In response to questions regarding homelessness reporting, it was explained that the revised indicator focuses on individuals sleeping rough who have been offered support but are not engaging with services. It was considered that this measure provided a more accurate reflection of the cohort presenting the greatest challenge and was therefore a more appropriate performance indicator.

Clarification was also provided regarding the winter night shelter. It was noted that the shelter operates seasonally, typically from November to April, although it can open earlier in response to adverse weather conditions. Individuals can stay each night throughout the operating period if required. It was emphasised that the shelter has not been classified as temporary accommodation.

Suggestions that the report presented an overly positive view of performance were rejected by cabinet members, stating that reporting was undertaken accurately, transparently and truthfully, with both achievements and areas of delay clearly identified. It was emphasised that where projects had been delayed, the administration accepted responsibility and reported this openly.

It was reiterated that the administration's role was to deliver for the people of Herefordshire, noting that alongside the 255 Council Plan milestones, the Council continued to provide more than 800 services across the county.

Example of progress was set out under the Transformation Programme, which comprised of three themes including 'Customer', 'The Way We Work' and 'Fix the Basics'. Examples of completed and ongoing initiatives included the Children's Improvement Plan, garden waste service improvements, digitalisation of children's and licensing services, online registrar booking systems, Public Rights of Way process reviews, support for working-age adults, predictive and preventative care models, virtual homes implementation, the Youth Employment Hub, Household Support Fund delivery, and work to support inclusion of neurodiverse children in schools.

It was highlighted that the Council would not be complacent and would continue to pursue service improvement and excellence.

In response to questions regarding highway improvement schemes, it was explained that one delayed scheme involved a trial reduction in the speed limit, undertaken at the request of local residents. The delay reflected the Council's decision to carry out the trial and review its effectiveness before implementing permanent measures.

Regarding flood risk investment, it was noted that when the current administration took office in May 2023 there was one officer within the flood risk team, compared with four officers currently. Members were advised that additional capacity had enabled increased investigation and response work following flooding events in 2024.

It was further noted that £2m had been allocated within the capital programme for flood mitigation measures. However, it was considered important that investment decisions be informed by appropriate evidence and assessment, including consideration of downstream impacts, effectiveness of proposed interventions, and opportunities to secure external funding from organisations such as the Environment Agency and DEFRA.

Members were advised that Section 19 flood investigation reports were being completed to inform future investment decisions and ensure funding was allocated fairly and effectively across the county.

Reference was also made to the Parish Drainage Grant Scheme, through which £1m had been invested in local drainage improvements, including measures to address surface water and highway flooding.

Assurance was given that the administration remained committed to progressing flood mitigation projects while ensuring that investment was targeted to areas of greatest need.

Members were advised that progress on the third integrated wetland scheme had been affected by two factors: changes to flood zone classifications by the Environment Agency and tighter discharge permit requirements. These changes affected the viability of the proposed wetland, as sufficient water flow and phosphate levels are required to generate phosphate mitigation credits, and the updated cost-benefit assessment no longer supported delivery of the scheme.

It was noted that work was continuing to identify alternative solutions. Regular engagement was taking place with housebuilders, private mitigation schemes were being pursued, and discussions were ongoing with Natural England regarding a broader range of phosphate mitigation measures as part of wider environmental development

plans. It was anticipated that this work would provide a wider range of options to support future development and phosphate mitigation across the county.

A Member expressed disappointment that the discussion had focused heavily on delays rather than the overall scale of delivery being undertaken by the Council. It was noted that, given the breadth and complexity of the Council's programme, not all projects could be delivered simultaneously.

In response to comments regarding active travel schemes, it was explained that the Aylestone route had been postponed because it could not be delivered concurrently with the Cadent gas works. The delay was therefore a practical consequence of coordinating major infrastructure projects.

The Member emphasised the importance of taking a strategic approach to infrastructure planning, particularly considering future housing growth requirements in Hereford. Members were encouraged to work collaboratively to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is delivered to support sustainable development and meet the needs of communities across Herefordshire.

A Member highlighted the significant progress being made at Ross Enterprise Park, noting that the project had been awaited for around 20 years and that construction was now underway. It was reported that six businesses had already expressed interest in the site and that planning for a second phase was underway. The development was described as an important opportunity to support employment growth and create higher-paid jobs within the county. Members also noted ongoing master planning work for Ross-on-Wye, including provision for schools, healthcare and other infrastructure needed to support future growth.

In response to concerns about delays to the city centre building (John Venn building) it was explained that progress had been affected by issues relating to securing the freehold of a flat within the building and changes in legislation. It was noted that these matters had been resolved and that while the project had been delayed, such schemes are often complex and can take time to progress.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, with the Leader seconding. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet:

- a) review performance for Q4 2025/26; and**
- b) agree any outstanding key milestones from Delivery Plan 2025/26 (see Appendix A) are carried forward to the Delivery Plan 2026/27**

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

103. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE QUARTER 4 2025-26

Councillor Stoddart cabinet member for finance and corporate services introduced the report.

It was noted that effective risk management was essential to delivering the priorities set out in the Council Plan, including the commitment to strengthen corporate and directorate-level risk management through the Corporate Risk Strategy.

Members were advised that the updated Risk Management Strategy 2025/26 and Risk Appetite Statement were approved in June 2025. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) reviewed the Corporate Risk Register as at 31 March 2026, considering risk scores, controls, mitigations, and any emerging risks and opportunities linked to the Council Plan 2024-28. No new corporate risks were identified for inclusion at Quarter 4.

The Committee noted that all nine corporate risks had been reviewed. Risk 7, relating to the council's ability to respond to a significant emergency, increased from a score of 9 to 12 due to the growing threat posed by cyber security risks and the potential impact on service delivery, public confidence, and finances.

It was reported that CLT is continuing to embed the revised risk management approach across the organisation. The 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan had been reviewed to align with the updated Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register and was approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in September 2025.

It was noted that risk management arrangements will continue to be monitored through the council's governance framework, with relevant matters to be reported through the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The report and its recommendations were commended for approval.

Comments from cabinet members:

None

Group Leaders were invited to offer their views:

The representative for Independents for Herefordshire outlined the views of their group and raised that:

The clearer presentation of changes within the risk register was welcomed and asked whether future reports highlight amendments more clearly.

There was an outstanding issue regarding member training on the Corporate Risk Register.

Questions were raised about whether there was evidence that the Corporate Risk Register was improving decision-making across the council, acknowledging that the benefits of risk management can be difficult to measure. The member invited Cabinet's views on the effectiveness of the register in supporting informed decisions.

Particular concern was expressed regarding Risk 4 (*Failure to deliver capital and major projects within identified resources and planned timeframes resulting in significant overspend and reduced project outcomes*), which the member considered to be the most significant threat facing the council. Clarification was sought on the actions and mitigations that had been implemented since the previous report, noting changes to the narrative and references to external support and project assurance activity. The member queried whether the reported actions were sufficiently addressing the risk and whether progress could be demonstrated over the reporting period.

The member also invited Cabinet members to comment on which corporate risks they regarded as the most significant and which posed the greatest concern to them.

The representative for Liberal Democrat Group outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Risk R8 (*Risks within the West Mercia community area*) was highlighted, and it was asked whether Cabinet would review, with partner organisations, the county's preparedness to respond to significant heat events and ensure that appropriate mitigation and response plans are in place both for the council and across the wider county.

The Green Group Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Concerned was expressed that the Corporate Risk Register did not appear to fully reflect the risks arising from delays and slippage in the delivery of major programmes and projects. Particular concern was raised regarding Risk R4, with the view that the register should more accurately capture the potential financial and delivery risks associated with significant capital projects and the borrowing required to support them. It was suggested that the current risk profile may understate these challenges.

The True Independents Leader outlined the views of their group and raised that:

Was present for this item but had no comments.

In response to the comments made:

In response to questions about whether the correct risks had been identified, it was stated that the council was satisfied that the Corporate Risk Register appropriately captured the key corporate risks and that risks were kept under continual review. Assurance was provided that these risks remained at the forefront of decision-making and project delivery.

Regarding major incidents, including flooding and severe weather events, it was noted that established emergency planning arrangements are in place, including Gold and Silver command structures and joint working with the relevant emergency services and partner organisations.

It was clarified that Councillor Proctor was referring to R7 (*Inability to respond adequately to a significant emergency affecting ability to provide priority services*) in their comments and was requested to provide details of any incidents outside of the meeting.

It was noted that the council's nine corporate risks had been reviewed and validated, with independent assurance from Kerry Diamond that nine risks represented an appropriate number for a Corporate Risk Register and reflected the council's highest-level strategic risks.

It was further confirmed that issues relating to extreme heat events would be considered within the scope of Risk R7 as part of ongoing risk monitoring and review arrangements.

Members were advised that risks were continually monitored and reassessed, with the council remaining alert to emerging issues. It was also explained that risk management plays an important role in informing decision-making across the organisation and was regularly used to support the delivery of council priorities and projects.

In response to comments regarding the brevity of the discussion, it was explained that Cabinet members had already considered and discussed the Corporate Risk Register in detail prior to its presentation at Cabinet and that risk management is reviewed regularly. Members were therefore asked not to view the length of the discussion at the meeting as a reflection of the importance Cabinet places on risk management.

The relative significance of the corporate risks was commented on, noting that Risk R4 was not considered the most concerning risk. Instead, Risk R2 (*Demand for client-based*

services continues to increase resulting in increased budget pressures and poor outcomes for those people in receipt of our services), and the resulting budget pressures, was highlighted as a major area of concern due to rising demand, particularly in adult social care, and insufficient government funding.

Further concerns were raised regarding the financial pressures associated with the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and the requirement to deliver significant savings targets. It was stated that, collectively, these financial and service demand pressures represented a greater risk to the council than potential cost increases associated with major capital projects.

The Leader of the Council concluded the discussions. Councillor Stoddart proposed the recommendations, with the Leader seconding. The Leader directed that the decision to be put before Cabinet is:

That Cabinet

a) Approves the updates to the Corporate Risk Register and actions to mitigate identified risks at Quarter 4 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.

The recommendations were unanimously approved.

It was confirmed the next meeting of cabinet was 30 July 2026 at 2:30pm.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Chairperson

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

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Peter McKay, Leominster	The Street Works Register still shows few, if any, of our unadopted highways, i.e., those not being maintained at public expense, with them filling many gaps in highway record connectivity, subject of the 2007 Regulations as referenced in your reply to my question 16 May 2024, and I seek your assurance that you plan to show those you are aware of, before putting onus on Parishes to report any omissions, and when this could be expected?	Councillor Hurcomb
Response: The Council publishes its Street Works Register as an online map and this contains all unadopted highways that it is aware are subject to recorded public highway rights. Members of the public and Parish Councils are welcome to submit applications under the Councils Highway Records Protocol for any routes which they have evidence are subject to public highway rights.			
Supplementary Question: Do you have any formal process, e.g. guidance, application form, example, for a parish to follow that considers that a hitherto unadopted highway should now be adopted and added to the List of Streets ?			
Supplementary Response: The information can be found via this link: Amendments to the highway records - Herefordshire Council			
PQ 2.	Amanda Martin, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendix A at p9, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. However, the documentation appears to indicate that the Council would contemplate entering into a binding construction contract before the FBC has been considered and approved.	Councillor Price

		Would the Council contemplate entering into a construction contract before the Full Business Case is approved?"	
Response: No, the Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting.			
Supplementary Question: Can the Cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure also confirm that no construction contract would be let for Phase 1 before all necessary land acquisition has been completed?			
Supplementary Response: Thank you for your question. We will know in due course about whether or not the full contract is awarded and the negotiations with private land owners remain subject to strict commercial confidentiality. The position will be updated in the next report to Cabinet in September 2026.			
PQ 3.	Kate Seekings, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices I note that the Council has delayed presenting the Full Business Case (FBC) for the SLR ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") from this meeting till September's. Does the Council constitution allow a binding construction contract to be entered into before and if a FBC is approved, before the Council has acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR, and when planning conditions remain undischarged?	Councillor Price
Response: The Council will not enter into the construction contract until the FBC has been published and reviewed by Cabinet which is planned for the September meeting. The report to Cabinet for the September meeting will set out the current status of land acquisition and the discharge of planning pre-construction planning conditions so that Cabinet are making a fully informed decision.			
Supplementary Question:			

What will Cabinet do if the contract cost for SLR construction exceeds the allocated budget, including contingency?			
Supplementary Response: Cabinet has set the delivery of Phase One has a priority and it is the first stage in unlocking future economic growth and unleashing Hereford's potential. Currently there is sufficient contingency to deliver the scheme within available budgets. Officers have also been developing value engineering options should they be required to keep the scheme costs within available budget. The council also continues to engage with the Government over the possibility of gaining grant funding to support the project.			
PQ 4.	Barry Jenkinson, Hereford	In the Q4 Performance Plan Appendices, I note that the Council has postponed presentation of the Full Business Case (FBC) for the Southern Link Road (SLR), described as Phase 1 of the Western Bypass, from this meeting until September. What legal advice has been given to the Council regarding the risks it would face were it to enter into a construction contract for the Southern Link Road ("Phase 1 of the Western Bypass") without delivering and first approving a Full Business Case?	Councillor Price
Response: No legal advice has been sought as the council does not intend to enter into a construction contract without first having published and approved the FBC. This is planned for the September Cabinet meeting.			
Supplementary Question: Has the Council acquired all the land it needs to build the SLR?			
Supplementary Response: Sam answer as provided for Question 2.			
PQ 5.	Jeremey Milln, Hereford	In my Hereford Central ward both the Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects are red flagged for delivery (purple flagged for c/fwd in the Delivery Update sheet at Appendix A to the Q4 Performance Report at agenda item 7). These are supported substantially by the Stronger Towns Fund which has extended the deadline for delivery from March 2025 to March 2028.	Councillor Bramer

		It is understood these projects are at risk of running into the sand financially and are significantly delayed. In £ terms what exactly is the financial requirement for these two projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion?	
Response: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government extended the deadlines for all 100+ Stronger Towns areas across the country to 2028, it was not a local request. For both the Hereford Museum and Art Gallery and Shirehall project we are working through respective Pre-Construction Services Agreement periods with the selected contractors to finalise designs and costings which are commercial in confidence at this stage. As with any historic building project, there are significant challenges and costs associated with bringing these building's back into use. We are working through these challenges with the contractors, design teams and external funders at this stage. We are aiming to be able to say more about the next steps and timescales over the next few weeks.			
Supplementary Question: I asked what in £ terms is the financial requirement for the overdue Museum & Art Gallery and the Library & Learning Centre projects, how will the shortfall be addressed and when might we expect completion? The response evades this on the pretext of 'commercial confidentiality' around services agreements and selected contractors about which I had not asked. It is tedious to have to use my supplementary to ask the question again but in doing so you have the opportunity at least to demonstrate you do know the answer. Therefore please answer the question and do so in an open, honest and transparent way consistent with the Nolan Principles.			
Supplementary Response: We explained in the previous answer that we are working with contractors to finalise costings with these projects, and our various funding partners. The final financial requirements are therefore not known until we complete this process. The costs are commercial in confidence as they are subject to tender processes, contract arrangements with private businesses, and the detailed costs provided by their supply chains. Thank you.			
PQ 6.	Mrs Morawiecka, Hereford	With the “School Run” being the biggest cause of significant congestion at peak times on the urban road networks & with the Government focussing funding on active travel between schools, home and work, will the Cabinet be looking to expand safer routes to schools and colleges, so that the children who have benefitted from Bikeability can apply their skills to cycling to & from home	Councillor Price

		and activities, helping reduce the biggest cause of urban congestion?	
Response: Cabinet recognises that journeys to and from schools make a significant contribution to peak-time congestion on the urban and rural road network and that enabling more children and young people to walk, wheel and cycle safely can play an important role in reducing car dependency and therefore give a reduction to congestion. The council currently deliver Bikeability training to children and are recognised as a leading council in England in the number of children being trained. Additionally we also provide road safety education in schools along with partnership working with all emergency services The recently adopted Herefordshire Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) includes commitments to improve active travel, promote school travel planning and deliver a programme of safer routes to school. It also identifies the need to reduce congestion, improve road safety for vulnerable users and increase travel choice. Public consultation on LTP5 highlighted strong support for safer walking and cycling routes to schools which is something Cabinet have prioritised. In addition, the council has recently completed its Herefordshire Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), which provides an evidence-based programme of walking, cycling and wheeling improvements and will help prioritise future investment opportunities. The LCWWIP supports the national objective of increasing the number of children travelling actively to school and identifies the delivery of connected, safe active travel networks as a key priority, this is support by the allocation of our Active Travel Grant for 2026/27 being entirely on a safer school route in Ledbury. The draft Parking Strategy recently consulted on also supports this approach by recognising the importance of reducing obstructive and unsafe parking, improving conditions for active travel and integrating parking management with wider transport objectives. Measures such as School Keep Clear enforcement, improved crossings and support for sustainable travel can help create safer environments around schools and colleges. Therefore, the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges where funding is available, drawing on priorities identified through the LCWWIP, LTP5 and future Active Travel England and Department for Transport funding programmes. This will help ensure that children who have benefited from Bikeability training are better able to put their skills into practice for everyday journeys, while also contributing to reduced congestion, improved air quality and healthier travel choices across Herefordshire.			
Supplementary Question: It's good the Cabinet recognises the "School Run" as a significant contribution to peak time congestion and that providing safer walking & cycling routes to school is a key priority. However, Cabinet's Budget priorities do not reflect the answer given.			

The answer says “the Cabinet will continue to seek opportunities to deliver safer routes to schools and colleges **where funding is available**”.

The Council are borrowing over £40million for a road, which their own report says will reduce walking and cycling (para 5.5.4), increasing fatal and serious accidents, all contrary to LTP5 policies.

Why then is the Cabinet not prioritising public borrowing for funding safer active travel routes to schools to effectively reduce urban congestion, improving health and safety of our young people and generating a better return on the investment than a new road?

Supplementary Response:

Cabinet does not accept the premise of the question. The council's investment programme is not a choice between supporting active travel and improving the highway network; both are important elements of the transport system and both are reflected within the priorities set out in the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5).

As set out in LTP5 and the recently completed Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP), the council is committed to increasing opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling, including the delivery of safer routes to schools, school travel planning, Bikeability training and measures that improve safety for vulnerable road users. The LCWWIP provides a long-term, evidence-based pipeline of active travel schemes that will be used to support future funding bids and investment decisions.

Funding opportunities for active travel infrastructure are typically delivered through specific Government programmes, including Active Travel England and Department for Transport grant funding. The council continues to pursue these opportunities alongside investment in the wider transport network. Through this approach we aim to reduce congestion, improve road safety, support healthier lifestyles and provide residents with greater travel choice. Ultimately, the objective of LTP5 is not to promote a single solution, but to deliver a balanced and integrated transport network that supports economic growth while increasing the proportion of journeys made by sustainable modes where that is a practical and attractive option.



Title of report: Adult Social Care - Scrutiny Management Board Recommendations

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 30 July 2026

Report by: Chair, Scrutiny Management Board

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

All

Purpose

To provide Cabinet with the recommendations of Scrutiny Management Board, following its scrutiny on of:

- the recent CQC inspection report on adult social care; and
- the council's budget and its plan for service transformation in light of budget pressures and the inspection findings.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Cabinet note the recommendations contained in paragraph 3 of this report as part of their consideration of the Herefordshire 2026-27 improvement plan following the recent inspection by the Care Quality Commission of Herefordshire's adult social care services.

Alternative options

1. Cabinet could decline to consider Scrutiny Management Board's recommendations. This is not recommended.

Key considerations

2. At its meeting on 6 July 2026, Scrutiny Management Board scrutinised Herefordshire Council's adult social care services. Its objectives were to:
 - a. scrutinise the recent CQC inspection report on adult social care in Herefordshire, and
 - b. further scrutinise the council's budget and its plan for service transformation in light of budget pressures and the inspection findings.
3. The committee made the following recommendations:
 - a. The executive strengthens the adult social care improvement plan so that it is underpinned with a strong evidence and data base, supporting the actions prioritised for funding.
 - b. The executive prioritises the delivery of the prevention strategy and the voluntary and community sector commissioning framework and ensures these link to the improvement plan and to each other.
 - c. The executive provides clarity on the outcome measures they will use to evidence the impact of the improvement plan.
 - d. The executive ensures there is adequate resource available for data analysis to deliver the adult social care improvement plan.
 - e. The executive undertakes work to cost fully the adults improvement plan and to address any gaps in the budget setting for 27/8 and onwards.
4. The chair of Scrutiny Management Board, Cllr Ben Proctor, has provided the following commentary in relation to these recommendations.
5. **The executive strengthens the adult social care improvement plan so that it is underpinned with a strong evidence and data base, supporting the actions prioritised for funding.**
 This recommendation seeks to ensure that actions prioritised in the plan are underpinned with evidence and data to demonstrate why they were chosen as a priority and how the executive believes the activity will relate to the outcomes and impact of the plan.
6. **The executive prioritises the delivery of the prevention strategy and the voluntary and community sector commissioning framework and ensures these link to the improvement plan and to each other.**
 The committee noted that these had yet to be produced but would be fundamental to the strategic changes outlined in the meeting. It hopes that prioritising this work would underpin the work in the improvement plan.
7. **The executive provides clarity on the outcome measures they will use to evidence the impact of the improvement plan.**
 This recommendation is to ensure the plan focuses on impact rather than activity.

8. **The executive ensures there is adequate resource available for data analysis to deliver the adult social care improvement plan.**
The committee heard that the council appears to lack the capacity to manipulate and analyse the data at its disposal at an appropriate scale and speed. It seeks assurance that the council has the right skilled officers, hardware and software to carry out the work required to support plan, as outlined in the first recommendation.
9. **The executive undertakes work to cost fully the adults improvement plan and to address any gaps in the budget setting for 27/8 and onwards.**
The improvement plan proposes fundamental changes to how Community Wellbeing will operate in the future. The committee broadly supports these proposals but believes that for them to be effective it needs to ensure adequate funding now to create longer-term efficiencies.

Community impact

10. There are no direct community impacts resulting from considering his report.

Environmental impact

9. Whilst this is a decision on back-office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

10. Because this report requires no decision, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Resource implications

11. There are no resource implications arising from consideration of this report. Any action resulting from an accepted recommendation may as a result have resource implications. These should be considered as part of any decision-making process pertaining to those actions.

Legal implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from consideration of this report. Any action resulting from an accepted recommendation may as result have resource implications. These should be considered as part of any decision-making process pertaining to those actions.

Risk management

13. The following risk has been identified.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the notification of recommendations from the scrutiny committees and agreement of an Executive Response should help mitigate this risk.

Consultees

14. Chair, Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Appendices

None

Background papers

None



Title of report: CQC Assessment report and Improvement plan

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Report by: Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing;

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment and to approve Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan 2026-2027.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Cabinet notes the outcome of the Herefordshire CQC Assessment;**
- b) Cabinet approves Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan 2026-2027;**

- c) Cabinet authorises the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing to lead this improvement plan on behalf of the Council and to take all operational decisions, as set out within this report and appendices.**

Alternative options

1. To not approve the CQC Assurance improvement plan. This is not an option as the council would not have a structured way to deliver the necessary improvements following the publication of the CQC Assurance report.

Key considerations

2. The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessments of how local authorities meet their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. These duties focus on promoting individual wellbeing, prevention, early intervention and person-centred care. The Care Act also establishes a national approach to assessing needs, determining eligibility and arranging personalised care and support. It gives carers equal rights to assessment and support, and requires councils to provide information, integrate services and safeguard adults at risk.
3. The CQC assesses local authority adult social care through a framework built around four themes: working with people, providing support, ensuring safety, and leadership. Each theme is underpinned by a set of quality statements that describe what good practice looks like. The CQC gathers evidence from people's experiences, feedback from staff and partners, and performance data, and uses this to score each quality statement. These scores are combined, supported by professional judgement and defined rating characteristics, to produce a single overall rating of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, or Inadequate.
4. Herefordshire Council's CQC assurance process began with formal notification on 7 April 2025, followed by submission of the Information Return on 2 May 2025. During July and August 2025, the CQC undertook provider and partner interviews, alongside case tracking activity in August 2025, where 50 cases were submitted and 10 selected for detailed review. A leadership presentation took place on 18 August 2025, ahead of the on-site inspection conducted between 9 and 11 September 2025. This was followed by the factual accuracy process from late December 2025 to mid-January 2026, before the final report was published on 29 May 2026.
5. Herefordshire Council received an overall rating of 'Requires Improvement' following the CQC assessment, achieving a score of 56%, which is seven percentage points below the threshold for a 'Good' rating. Across the nine quality statements, two areas were rated as 'Good' — Partnerships and communities, and Safeguarding — highlighting strong partnership working and effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
6. Herefordshire Council welcomes the findings of the CQC assessment. The process has been a positive, learning experience for the authority, providing a focus in which to celebrate and promote strengths as well as to crystallise areas for improvement. Through the process, CQC has endorsed the strengths with Good ratings and has affirmed the areas for improvement. This baseline assessment gives the council a solid foundation on which to move forward to maximise strengths and expedite progress on areas for improvement. CQC did not identify any adults at risk and/or in need of safeguarding during the process.
7. There were no surprises resulting from the CQC assessment. No new issues were identified — either as a strength or an area for improvement — and no known issues were identified as being of higher risk than expected.

8. The CQC findings in relation to our strengths mirrored the council's own self-assessment. The whole council commitment to excellence in adult social care and emphasis on collaboration with partners, providers and communities to meet our Care Act requirements is clear from the strengths identified, namely:
 - I. **Strong prevention model** supported by Talk Community and a new Prevention in Adult Social Care Strategy.
 - II. **Developing coproduction**, with lived experience boards influencing strategies, commissioning, and continuous service improvement.
 - III. **High-performing care market**, with the majority of home care and care homes rated good or outstanding and strong provider relationships.
 - IV. **Effective hospital discharge arrangements**, driven by whole system multi-disciplinary team working and positive feedback from health partners.
 - V. **Strong safeguarding outcomes**, with high proportion of enquiries meeting desired outcomes and robust multiagency governance.
 - VI. **Inclusive, engaged workforce**, supported by the THRIVE values, leadership development, and strong staff engagement.
 - VII. **Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion**, backed by the ADASS Equality Diversity and Inclusion tool and targeted cultural competency training.
 - VIII. **Innovation through technology**, including TEC pilots, predictive technologies and digital tools that support independence and prevention.
 - IX. **Robust governance and leadership**, aligned with good governance principles and active system partnership working.
 - X. **Significant transformation achievements**, including new commissioning frameworks, high direct payments uptake, and strong community-based support.
9. The self-assessment equally identified key areas for improvement, which the CQC assessment has affirmed. They recognised that improvement plans were in place but they were not fully implemented and improvements embedded at the time of the site visit. However, progress has been made in the intervening six months with full implementation due by 31 March 2027.
10. Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan, at Appendix A, sets out the delivery of key actions across seven improvement areas. These areas and their supporting plans are:
 - I. Strengthening the **front door**, specifically embedding Community Connectors, TEC and therapy in the front door offer through our Managing Demand project.
 - II. Improving the **reablement** offer, through streamlining the reablement pathways from hospital discharge and the community set out in our Reablement Project Plan.
 - III. Improving the offer for **unpaid carers** in the county, through implementation of the co-produced All Ages Carers Strategy and led by the Carers Partnership Board.
 - IV. Strengthening the **Occupational Therapy service** within the local authority, through implementation of the OT Practice review and service improvement plan.
 - V. Improving our capacity to manage **demand and waiting lists**, through implementation of a new structure for adult social care from July 2026.
 - VI. Driving **innovation in market development** for working age adults, through the Learning Disabilities transformation programme.
 - VII. Strengthening the use of **data and associated analysis** to support practice improvement and future service modelling, through our Data Development Plan.
11. Governance of the improvement plan will be achieved through bimonthly updates to the Corporate Improvement Board and monthly updates to the Cabinet Member and full Directorate Team. Regular progress reports will be submitted to the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Issues requiring executive oversight will be escalated to Cabinet, via the Cabinet Member, where required.

Community impact

12. Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan identifies seven priority improvement areas, each intended to strengthen services for residents. Taken together, these actions are expected to have a positive impact on people living in Herefordshire.
13. In line with the overarching vision, 'Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do', the CQC improvement plan directly supports the Council Plan 'People' priority by driving improvements in how we work with people, provide support, ensure safety and lead the system – ensuring residents can live well, independently and safely.

Environmental impact

14. Herefordshire's CQC Improvement Plan is focused on strengthening adult social care services and improving outcomes for residents. The plan is not expected to have any significant direct environmental impacts. Where actions within the plan influence service delivery or operational practices, these will be implemented in line with the Council's wider environmental and sustainability commitments, ensuring that any indirect environmental considerations are appropriately managed.
15. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
16. Whilst activity because of the implementation of this improvement plan will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's environmental policy.

Equality duty

17. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
18. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this improvement plan and it has been found to have low impact for equality. Individual projects and delivery workstreams within the improvement plan will complete an equality impact assessment, where required, as a fundamental element to planning, decision making and implementation.

Resource implications

19. There are no direct financial implications arising from approval of the improvement plan. Delivery of the planned improvements will be managed within the current and agreed Community Wellbeing budget for 2026-27. If any additional resource requirements are identified as the improvement plan is developed, these will be supported by appropriate business cases for approval and funding identified.

Legal implications

20. There are no direct or specific legal implications in this report other than those mentioned in earlier parts of the report.

21. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

22. Risks associated with delivery of the CQC improvement plan will be entered onto the relevant project, service or directorate risk register and escalated as appropriate. The corporate risk register is a living document and reviewed regularly by Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee.
23. The table below summarises the main risks to delivering this improvement plan, together with their potential impact and mitigation.

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of workforce stability – Reduced delivery pace, reduced capacity to deliver and less consistent implementation.	Workforce planning, recruitment, retention and leadership oversight.
Lack of delivery capacity - Improvement activity may be delayed by operational demand.	Phased delivery, protected capacity and regular performance oversight.
Inconsistent prioritisation of work - Effort may be spread too thinly across competing priorities.	Clear prioritisation, sequencing and routine review of progress.
Lack of partner engagement - Progress may be affected where delivery relies on partners.	Strong partnership governance, shared planning and escalation of issues.
Unrealistic timescales - Delivery milestones may slip.	Regular review of milestones, dependencies and delivery risks.

Consultees

24. The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing has provided active oversight throughout the development of the Herefordshire CQC Improvement Plan, including regular briefings, review of key documents such as the self-assessment and supporting evidence, and the provision of challenge and feedback to inform its development.
25. A political group consultation has been held where the improvement plan was presented followed by specific discussion around working age adults, reablement and unpaid carers.
26. Following publication of the CQC Assessment Report, stakeholder briefings were delivered through webinars and supporting communications, engaging statutory partners, commissioned providers, and wider stakeholders including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, community groups and lived experience boards. This engagement supported transparency, feedback and ongoing dialogue, forming part of the wider consultation approach underpinning the development of the CQC Improvement Plan.

Appendices

Appendix A: Herefordshire CQC Improvement Plan

Background papers

Herefordshire's CQC published report - [Herefordshire Council: local authority assessment - Care Quality Commission](#)

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

ADASS – the Association of Directors of Adult Social Care

ASC – Adult Social Care

CQC – Care Quality Commissioning

TEC – Technology Enabled Care

VCSE - Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise

Appendix 1

CQC Assurance

Herefordshire Improvement Plan 2026/27

1. Background

The Health and Social Care Act 2022 provided the Care Quality Commission (CQC) with regulatory powers to assess local authorities' performance of their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. Formal assessments began in early 2024, with a target of completing assessments of all local authorities within two years.

Herefordshire Council received its notification on 7 April 2025, and the final report was published on 29 May 2026.

Herefordshire Council welcomes the findings of the Care Quality Commission assessment. The process has been a positive, learning experience for the authority, providing a focus in which to celebrate and promote strengths and to crystallise areas for improvement. We are pleased that CQC has endorsed our strengths with Good ratings and has affirmed the areas for improvement. This baseline assessment gives us a solid foundation on which to move forward to maximise our strengths and expedite progress on our areas for improvement. We were also pleased that CQC did not identify any adults at risk and/or in need of safeguarding during the process.

2. Assessment Framework

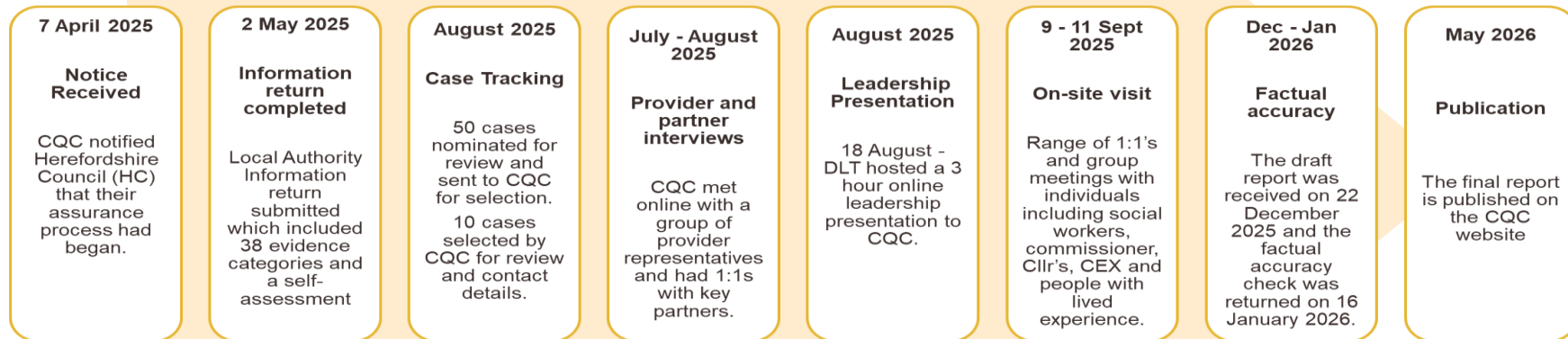
The CQC's assessment framework centres around four themes, with each containing 'quality statements' setting out what is expected of the local authority, and 'outcomes' for people. The detailed quality statements and outcomes are contained in the overall results table in section 3.

Theme 1 – Working with People	Theme 2 – Providing Support	Theme 3 – Ensuring Safety	Theme 4 - Leadership
- Assessing needs - Supporting people to live healthier lives - Equity in experience and outcomes	- Care provision, integration and continuity - Partnerships and communities	- Safe systems, pathways and transitions - Safeguarding	- Governance, management and sustainability - Learning, improvement and innovation

The CQC used information from the following four key evidence categories to form its conclusions. For every quality statement, each evidence category was scored giving a total score and rating for each statement; the statement scores were then combined to form the overall score and rating.

- **People's experiences** – gathered from interviews with people with care and support needs and carers, plus national and local survey results.
- **Feedback from staff and leaders** – gathered from interviews with leaders and focus groups with managers, commissioners and frontline practitioners.
- **Feedback from partners** - gathered from 1:1 and group interviews with senior leaders external to Herefordshire Council, plus representatives of care provider organisations.
- **Processes** – including the council's performance in national returns, internal data, and a comprehensive Information Return comprising 38 categories of evidence, summarised in an overall self-assessment of strengths, areas for further development and performance.

3. Assessment timeline



4. Results

The overall outcome of the assessment was a rating of **Requires Improvement**, with a score of 56.

Theme	Quality Statement	Outcome for people	Herefordshire Result
Theme 1: Working with people	Assessing needs		2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We maximise the effectiveness of people's care and treatment by assessing and reviewing their health, care, wellbeing and communication needs with them	- I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me - I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals	
	Supporting people to live healthier lives		2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control. We support them to live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support	- I can get information and advice about my health, care and support and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally and emotionally - I am supported to plan ahead for important changes in my life that I can anticipate	
	Equity in experiences and outcomes		2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor their care, support and treatment in response to this	I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals	

Theme 2: Providing Support	Care provision, integration and continuity		2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We understand the diverse health and care needs of people and our local communities, so care is joined-up, flexible and supports choice and continuity	I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me	
	Partnerships and communities		3 - Evidence shows a good standard
	We understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement	- The local authority works actively towards integrating care and support services with services provided by partner agencies. This achieves better outcomes for people who need care and support and unpaid carers and helps to reduce inequalities - Partnership working helps to ensure that care and support meets the diverse needs of individual people and communities. People experience a seamless care and support journey, and their support is co-ordinated across different agencies and services	
Theme 3: Ensuring safety	Safe systems, pathways and transitions		2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We work with people and our partners to establish and maintain safe systems of care, in which safety is managed, monitored and assured. We ensure continuity of care, including when people move between different services	- When I move between services, settings or areas, there is a plan for what happens next and who will do what, and all the practical arrangements are in place - I feel safe and am supported to understand and manage any risks	
	Safeguarding		3 - Evidence shows a good standard
	We work with people to understand what being safe means to them as well as with our partners on the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.	I feel safe and am supported to understand and manage any risks	

Theme 4: Leadership	Governance, management and sustainability	2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability and good governance. We use these to manage and deliver good quality, sustainable care, treatment and support. We act on the best information about risk, performance and outcomes, and we share this securely with others when appropriate.	
	Learning, improvement and innovation	2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls
	We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe, effective practice and research.	

5. CQC findings

The CQC findings in relation to our **strengths** mirrored our own self-assessment. The report paints a picture of a **council with strong values, committed staff, effective partnerships and a clear preventative vision**, particularly through Talk Community, safeguarding and quality assurance. Our whole council commitment to excellence in adult social care and emphasis on collaboration with partners, providers and communities to meet our Care Act requirements is clear:

- **Strong prevention model** supported by Talk Community and a new Prevention in Adult Social Care Strategy.
- **Developing coproduction**, with lived experience boards influencing strategies, commissioning, and continuous service improvement.
- **High-performing care market**, with the majority of home care and care homes rated good or outstanding and strong provider relationships.
- **Effective hospital discharge arrangements**, driven by positive, whole system multi-disciplinary team working.
- **Strong safeguarding outcomes**, with high proportion of enquiries meeting desired outcomes and robust multiagency governance.
- **Inclusive, engaged workforce**, supported by the THRIVE values, leadership development, and strong staff engagement.
- **Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion**, backed by the ADASS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion tool and targeted cultural competency training.
- **Innovation through technology**, including Technology Enabled Care (TEC) pilots, predictive technologies and digital tools that support independence and prevention.

- **Robust governance and leadership**, aligned with good governance principles and active system partnership working.
- **Significant transformation achievements**, including new commissioning frameworks, high direct payments uptake, and strong community-based support.

Our self-assessment equally identified key **areas for improvement**, and we were pleased that the CQC assessment affirmed these areas and noted that we had improvement plans in place. We accept that our existing plans were not fully implemented and improvements embedded at the time of the site visit, but progress has been made in the intervening six months with full implementation due by 31 March 2027:

1. Strengthening the **front door**, specifically embedding Community Connectors, TEC and therapy in the front door offer through our Prevention and Reablement transformation project.
2. Improving the **reablement** offer, through clarifying and streamlining the reablement pathways from hospital discharge and the community, set out in our Reablement Project Plan.
3. Improving the offer for **unpaid carers** in the county, through implementation of the co-produced All Ages Carers Strategy and led by the Carers Partnership Board.
4. Improving the **OT service** within the local authority, through implementation of the OT Practice review and service improvement plan.
5. Improving our capacity to manage **demand and waiting lists**, through implementation of a new structure for adult social care from June 2026.
6. Driving **innovation in market development** for working age adults, through the Learning Disabilities transformation programme.
7. Strengthening the use of **data and associated analysis** to support practice improvement and future service modelling, through our Data Development Plan.

We have a clear transformation programme in place within the directorate which is led by the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing (DASS), supported by the three Service Directors. This programme, which incorporates the above plans, is robustly monitored on a weekly and monthly basis and that is incorporated within our wider governance arrangements for this improvement plan.

6. Improvement Plan

This plan sets out our improvement priorities, high-level actions and intended outcomes for people. It is supported by a detailed delivery plan with timelines, responsible officers and progress updates.

Improvement priority 1: Strengthen the front door of adult social care			Lead: Front Door Transformation Lead	
People will experience...	Because we have....	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Timely assessments , with fewer delays and less repetition, so they get the right support when they need it. Feeling listened to and involved in their assessment, with their health, wellbeing, communication needs and personal circumstances properly understood.	Delivered faster, streamlined assessments.	Review existing staff competencies and develop and deliver training sessions, to ensure consistent practice	Front Door Transformation Lead	September 2026
	Delivered proportionate interventions and support.	Implement renewed advice and referral documentation to support consistency, deliver proportionate interventions and improve flow of information	Head of Adult Social Care Operations	October 2026
	Reduced waiting lists	Develop and implement practical checklists for staff to complete, to promote and enable use of Occupational Therapy, TEC and community based solutions to support and evidence consistent decision making	Front Door Transformation Lead	July 2026
		Work closely with external agencies, including Wye Valley Trust, West Mercia Ambulance Service and out of hours agencies, to review and refine referral processes into ASC	Front Door Transformation Lead	September 2026
Early signposting to community-based support that helps them stay well, independent and connected. Support to build on their strengths and networks ,	Clearer and more consistent engagement with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), with shared expectations about roles, contribution and impact within the adult social care system.	Deliver Community Connector and TEC training to ART team, to support staff to be confident in prevention offers and community options	Front Door Transformation Lead	July 2026
		Develop and implement robust referral processes to Community Connectors from	Front Door Transformation	September 2026

Improvement priority 1: Strengthen the front door of adult social care			Lead: Front Door Transformation Lead	
People will experience...	Because we have....	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
reducing reliance on formal care. Increased confidence to help themselves and plan ahead for changes in their lives.	A more inclusive and diverse local provider landscape, enabling smaller community organisations to contribute to prevention, early support and resilience. More proportionate commissioning processes, making it easier for organisations of different sizes to engage.	the front door, utilising the data management system - Strengthen prevention and resilience through the Talk Community approach, including stronger use of Community Action Networks (CANs) and voluntary and community sector partnerships to provide coordinated, community-based support around residents' needs - Improve Front Door processes to make best use of VCS and other community based organisational support, supporting residents to be independent for longer in their choice of environment	Lead and Head of Communities Head of Communities Front Door Transformation Lead	December 2026 August 2026
Easy to find clear, accurate and trusted information when they need it, without unnecessary delays or confusion. Information that is presented in plain language, helping them understand their options quickly and confidently.	Easy to access, clear, accurate and trusted information available Increased awareness of support options, especially for carers and self-funders.	- Develop and implement online referral options, for individuals and professionals - Improve accessibility and usability of online information, to provide clear navigation and plain-language content, waiting well processes and information - Expand use of accessible formats (easy read, video, alternative languages) - Produce a front door service briefing note, and share across range of stakeholders, to support understanding of role and process at the front door of ASC	Head of Adult Social Care Operations Head of Delivery and Improvement Head of Delivery and Improvement Front Door Transformation Lead	December 2026 October 2026 October 2026 September 2026

Improvement priority 2: Improve the reablement offer				Lead: Service Director All Ages Commissioning
People will experience...	Because we have...	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Effective reablement that enables to regain their independence as soon as possible	A clear, shared reablement model, co-owned with partners, with an agreed purpose, scope and expectations across the system. Supported more people to regain independence and avoid unnecessary long-term care. Stronger multi-agency working and informed decision-making, supported by robust outcome measurement and clear data on reablement outcomes and demand.	• Complete the planned review of the reablement model with partners • Clarify the purpose and pathways of reablement, including community access • Strengthen outcome measurement to track reablement success and inform improvement • Develop and implement a communication plan for partners and the community to ensure consistent understanding of the reablement model, pathways and expectations	Service Manager D2A and BCF	May 2026
			Service Manager D2A and BCF	July 2026
			Service Manager D2A and BCF	September 2026
			Service Manager D2A and BCF / OT Lead	September 2026

Improvement priority 3: Improve the offer for unpaid carers				Lead: Commissioning Lead for Carers
People will experience....	Because we have...	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Recognition, acknowledgement and support for their caring role from first contact with services. Proactive, consistent carers' assessments , so they are recognised and supported earlier	Effective partnerships in place to identify and support carers early before they reach crisis point	• Embed consistent practice across all ASC teams so carers are offered a carers' assessment and support plan, with clearer pathways, communication and follow-up • Deliver further carers training to staff across Community Wellbeing, to support early identification, information and advice • Implement Mosaic system changes to ensure carers are recorded appropriately	Principal Social Worker	September 2026
			Principal Social Worker	December 2026
			Commissioning lead for Carers	September 2026

Support plans that reflect what matters to the them Support to plan ahead, including contingency planning for changes or emergencies, reducing anxiety and uncertainty	Strengthened personalised care and choice, through carers assessments and support plans	• Monitor quality, through audit, performance data, and through supervision, that ASC staff are proactively identifying carers and are offering assessments • Monitor quality and performance data from commissioned services, to ensure carers are identified, referred and supported appropriately • Develop and implement a corporate carers approach, including a national carers card, refreshed Carers Partnership Board arrangements and a carers network to inform service development. • Fully utilise learning and support offer from Regional carers network • Refresh and update the All Age Carers Strategy and delivery plan	Principal Social Worker	January 2027
			Commissioning Manager	September 2026
			Commissioning lead for Carers	December 2026
			Commissioning lead for Carers	September 2026
Access to a wider range of flexible break and support options, reflecting different needs, preferences and circumstances. Reassurance that emergency respite is available when needed, reducing anxiety and stress. Timely, reliable support during crisis or unforeseen situations.	Diversified the break and support options available for people	• Develop and implement break and support offer for Carers across Herefordshire, including clear definitions • Expand and embed Shared Days opportunities • Proactively promote available support and services through strengthening the role of Community Connectors and community-based support	Commissioning lead for Carers	September 2026
			Commissioning Manager Commissioning Manager and Head of Communities	December 2026

Improvement priority 4: Strengthen the OT service				Lead: OT Lead
People will experience....	Because we have....	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Timely support to remain safe and independent at home. Quicker, more proportionate OT interventions OT support that focuses on independence and prevention , helping people avoid escalation into more intensive services where possible.	Reduced waiting times for OT assessments and equipment	• Design and implement a single standardised referral pathway for OT	OT Lead	January 2027
	Redesigned processes and trusted assessor models that make best use of professional skills.	• Agree and publish consistent eligibility criteria and thresholds for OT service	OT Lead	October 2026
	Clear end-to-end oversight of equipment pathways, with improved visibility of stock availability, delivery/installation times and outcomes.	• Reduce OT and equipment waiting lists through trusted assessor models and process redesign	OT Lead	January 2027
		• Improve end-to-end visibility of equipment requests, stock and delivery	Commissioning Manager	July 2026
Better communication and support while waiting, A more responsive and consistent OT service		• Create an Equipment Specialist OT role with clinical governance responsibility	OT Lead	October 2026
	OT staff capacity focused on direct practice, with reduced administrative burden through streamlined paperwork and digital solutions.	• Reduce administrative burden on OT staff through streamlined paperwork and digital solutions	OT Lead	October 2026
	Stronger 'waiting well' arrangements, ensuring people are supported, informed and reassured while awaiting assessments, equipment or adaptations.	• Establish structured communication and information-sharing protocols	OT Lead	January 2027
		• Strengthen "waiting well" processes for people awaiting equipment or adaptations	OT Lead	October 2026

Improvement priority 5: Improve our capacity to manage demand and waiting lists
Lead: Service Director Adult Social Care and Housing

People will experience....	Because we have...	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Clear communication and support while waiting	Improved triage, prioritisation and workforce flexibility to reduce unnecessary delays.	• Further strengthen “waiting well” processes to ensure consistent, meaningful contact while people wait	Head of ASC Operations	September 2026
	More consistent and fair decision-making, supported by better management information showing who is waiting, for what service and for how long.	• Improve management information to clearly show who is waiting, for what service, and for how long	Head of ASC Operations	September 2026
	Improved flow through the system, reducing backlogs and pressure points and helping people avoid escalation while waiting.	• Increase flexibility in workforce deployment (e.g. trusted assessor models)	Head of ASC Operations	September 2026
Greater continuity and consistency of support , with fewer changes in the people involved in their care. Improved quality of support , delivered by a confident, well-trained workforce with clear roles and responsibilities.	A more resilient and sustainable adult social care workforce, with improved recruitment, retention and skill mix aligned to demand	• Deliver adult social care restructure • Deliver the Adult Social Care workforce strategy, addressing recruitment, retention and skill mix	Service Director ASC & Housing	October 2026
	More consistent, high-quality practice, supported by clear roles, career pathways and workforce development	• Expand “grow your own” approaches, apprenticeships and career pathways	Service Director ASC & Housing	March 2027
	Greater continuity and stability of support, with fewer changes in practitioners and stronger professional relationships	• Use workforce data to proactively identify and address pressure points	Principal Social Worker	March 2027
Safeguarding responses that are proportionate, consistent and focused on outcomes , rather than process.	Clearer, more consistent safeguarding decision-making, supported by improved recording and information sharing.	• Implement a standardised process to provide feedback to referrers on safeguarding outcomes and develop	Service Director ASC & Housing	July 2026
		• Implement a standardised process to provide feedback to referrers on safeguarding outcomes and develop	Principal Social Worker	September 2026

Improvement priority 5: Improve our capacity to manage demand and waiting lists
Lead: Service Director Adult Social Care and Housing

People will experience....	Because we have...	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Everyone working together well to keep them safe.	Stronger feedback loops with referrers, improving shared learning and confidence in safeguarding processes.	communication guidelines, so referrers know what to expect • Develop and implement a safeguarding audit template, to strengthen recording, information sharing and monitor decision-making	Principal Social Worker	October 2026
Advocacy support , that supports and represents them from the outset of safeguarding processes.	Earlier and more appropriate advocacy referrals, particularly for people who lack capacity or face barriers to being involved. Clearer oversight of advocacy access and impact, through improved monitoring of referrals and outcomes.	• Strengthen staff understanding of advocacy duties within safeguarding, with a focus on early referral • Work with the advocacy provider and partners to identify and address barriers to access • Reinforce guidance and training on advocacy duties, focusing on early identification and referral • Monitor advocacy referrals and usage to understand gaps and address barriers	Principal Social Worker	October 2026
			Commissioning Manager	October 2026
			Commissioning Manager / Principal Social Worker	October 2026
			Commissioning Manager	September 2026

Improvement priority 6: Drive innovation in market development for working age adults
Lead: Service Director All Ages Commissioning (AAC)

People will experience....	Because we have....	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Support that better reflects their needs and aspirations More choice, stability and continuity of care Support that enables them to live more independent, fulfilling lives within their local communities.	Greater availability of local services, reducing reliance on out-of-county placements where needs can be met closer to home.	• Review commissioning and contracting approaches to improve stability and value for money	Commissioning Manager	September 2026
	Improved quality and consistency of provision, as commissioning and contracting approaches drive better outcomes and value for money.	• Deliver Market Position Statement priorities to address gaps in local provision	Service Director AAC	April 2027
	More joined-up planning with providers, supporting resilience, workforce stability and innovation in how support is delivered.	• Continue to reduce reliance on out-of-county placements where needs can be met locally	Commissioning Manager	April 2027
		• Strengthen strategic engagement with providers to support sustainability and workforce challenges	Service Manager - Market Management	April 2027
		• Deliver the business case for establishing an in-county provision	Service Director AAC	December 2026

Improvement priority 7: Strengthen the use of data and insight**Lead: Corporate Director Community Wellbeing**

People will experience...	Because we have....	Actions	Lead officer	Delivered by
Support that improves over time Safer, higher-quality care More consistent and informed decisions	Used data effectively to understand need, demand and outcomes.	• Implement a data quality improvement programme focused on completeness, consistency, and timeliness of case recording	Head of Corporate Performance	March 2027
	Translated learning from audits, reviews, complaints and feedback	• Deliver improvements to case management system to capture end to end client journeys	Head of Corporate Performance	March 2027
	Clearer accountability and oversight, helping ensure issues are identified and addressed earlier.	• Commence the development of a holistic data insight that provides demand and activity data alongside other available data sets, for example, quality and safety incidents, outcomes and customer experience	Head of Corporate Performance	December 2026
		• Integrate analytical input into data reporting that includes national data sets and comparators	Head of Corporate Performance	December 2026
		• Deliver briefings and training sessions to support managers to use data confidently and consistently.	Head of Corporate Performance	March 2027
		• Review existing ASC learning log approach and further embed into practice through clear action plans, monitoring impact and reporting into DLT.	Principal Social Worker	October 2026
		• Promote innovation and best practice through peer learning, external networks and partnerships.	Head of Delivery and Improvement	December 2026
		• Strengthen co-production and feedback loops to ensure people's feedback and experience directly improves practice	Head of Delivery and Improvement	December 2026

7. Measuring impact

We will measure success through a combination of delivery, impact and assurance measures.

Delivery measures will track whether the actions, milestones and improvement activities set out in the plan are being completed as intended. Impact measures will assess whether these changes are leading to improved experiences, outcomes and performance for individuals, carers, staff and partners. Assurance measures will provide evidence that improvements are embedded and sustainable, drawing on quality assurance activity, audit findings, feedback from people with lived experience and performance data.

Together, these measures will help us understand both whether we are delivering the plan and whether it is making a meaningful difference.

Delivery Measures	Impact Measures	Assurance Measures
Are we doing what we said we would do?	Is it making a difference?	How do we know improvement is real and sustainable?
• Percentage of improvement plan actions completed on time • Delivery of agreed workforce development and training programmes • Timely completion of agreed programme of co-production and engagement activities • Completion of policy, procedure and governance improvements • Delivery of planned communication and engagement activity	• Reduction in waiting times for assessments, reviews and services • Increased proportion of people supported to remain independent at home with community based support • Reduction in out of county placements • Fewer complaints and themes of concern • Improved workforce stability and staff confidence • Increase in number of carers' assessments and reduction in carer breakdown	• Improvement in practice quality identified through case file audits • Quality assurance audits and peer reviews • Feedback from people with lived experience and carers • Evidence gathered through CQC-style mock inspections and deep dives • Complaints' themes showing sustained improvement over time • Improved performance against Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and local performance indicators

8. Monitoring and oversight

Governance of the improvement plan will be achieved through:

Board / Meeting	Description	Regularity of Updates
Corporate Improvement Board	This is a new board, chaired by the Chief Executive, to maintain corporate oversight of the improvement plan. Membership will comprise Corporate Leadership Team and the regional Care and Health Improvement Advisor. Key partners will also be invited to attend the board as required.	Bi-monthly
Cabinet Member and full Directorate Leadership Team	The Cabinet Member will meet monthly with the full Directorate Leadership Team to track progress on the improvement plan.	Monthly
Core Directorate Leadership Team (Core DLT)	Chaired by the Corporate Director and comprising the three Service Directors, this will address any emerging issues or barriers swiftly to ensure continued focus on delivery.	Weekly

Regular progress reports will be submitted to the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Issues requiring executive oversight will be escalated to Cabinet, via the Cabinet Member, where required.

9. Risk management

The table below summarises the main risks to delivering this improvement plan, together with their potential impact, mitigation and lead oversight.

Risk	Potential impact on delivery	Mitigation	Lead oversight
Lack of workforce stability	Reduced delivery pace, reduced capacity to deliver and less consistent implementation.	Workforce planning, recruitment, retention and leadership oversight.	Service Director Adult Social Care and Housing
Lack of delivery capacity	Improvement activity may be delayed by operational demand.	Phased delivery, protected capacity and regular performance oversight.	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing

Risk	Potential impact on delivery	Mitigation	Lead oversight
Inconsistent prioritisation of work	Effort may be spread too thinly across competing priorities.	Clear prioritisation, sequencing and routine review of progress.	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing with Directorate Leadership Team
Lack of partner engagement	Progress may be affected where delivery relies on partners.	Strong partnership governance, shared planning and escalation of issues.	Relevant Service Director / Lead Officer
Unrealistic timescales	Delivery milestones may slip.	Regular review of milestones, dependencies and delivery risks.	Corporate Improvement Board

Appendix: Useful further documents

- [Assessment framework for local authority assurance - Care Quality Commission](#)
- [Herefordshire Council: local authority assessment - Care Quality Commission](#)
- [Council committed to further Adult Social Care improvement following CQC assessment - Herefordshire Council](#)



Title of report: Children's Services Statutory Direction

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Cabinet member children and young people

Report by: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Report Author: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) which took place 10-21 November 2025 and published 12 January 2026 and provide the DfE update on the statutory direction to Herefordshire LA (appendix A).

Recommendation(s)

That

- a) **Cabinet note the improvement made in Children's Services and the positive report completed by the DfE appointed commissioner; and**
- b) **Cabinet note the formal lifting of the statutory direction placed on Children's Services.**

Alternative options

- 1. None

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Diane Kennett, Tel: 01432 383744, email: Diane.Kennett@herefordshire.gov.uk

Key considerations

2. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.
3. The inspection report found Herefordshire Children's Services to be Inadequate in all areas. The report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available [here](#).

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

4. In response the Secretary of State issued a [Statutory Direction](#) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022 and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services.
5. This was revised March 23 following the Commissioner report to the Secretary of State which outlined additional concern for potential for improvement.
6. Good progress with renewed pace was noted in the Ofsted monitoring visits in November 2024, February 2025 and June 2025 leading up to the full ILACS in November 2025.
7. The inspection report found Herefordshire Children's Services to be **Good overall effectiveness**. The report was published on 12 January 2026 Appendix B

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

8. The latest report completed by the current commissioner, Ms McMillan, was presented to an internal senior executive group in June 26. (Appendix C).
9. The report: **Recommendation** Based on the evidence presented, it is my view that Herefordshire Children's Services has demonstrated sustained, embedded, and measurable improvement. The conditions that led to statutory intervention have been addressed, and the service now operates with strong leadership, effective governance, and a clear focus on children's outcomes. Herefordshire Local Authority are committed to the national reform programme and are well advanced in implementing the FFP model.

Based on the points addressed above, I am happy to recommend that the Statutory Direction is revoked and the formal intervention in Herefordshire Children's Social Care be brought to an end.

10. The Commissioner's report was submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2026 for a decision.
11. The Secretary of State decision letter has been received (Appendix E)

Community impact

12. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Good overall effectiveness' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of children and families in Herefordshire.
13. Ensuring co-ordination and golden thread between the Council Delivery Plan, The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Plan and the Safeguarding Partnership Business Plan will ensure Children's Services contributions to the Council ambition '*to do everything we do, well*' and drive forward our committed ambition to be *Child Friendly Herefordshire*

Environmental impact

14. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

15. Children and young people who are assessed to be 'in need' of support, protection and care are additionally vulnerable, often as a result of abuse, neglect, exploitation and a range of personal and family circumstances.
16. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

Resource implications

18. There are no resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

19. There are no legal implications arising from this

Risk management

20. The following risks have been considered.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Partnership prioritisation and engagement – recognising a joint responsibility to deliver high quality services that make a difference to their lives	Extensive partnership engagement activity and key partnership work has and continues to take place in a wide range of operational and strategic forums to promote relationship based joint working, learning and development.
Decline in the quality of services leading to negative inspection outcomes in the future.	Children Services Business plan for 2026/27/28 has been set out to support and maintain the delivery of good quality services.

Consultees

Not applicable.

Appendices

Appendix A	Revised Statutory Direction March 23
Appendix B	Ofsted outcome letter Minister Macallister February 26 Link: 50293401
Appendix C	Commissioners Report June 26
Appendix D	Children's Services Business Plan 2026/27
Appendix E	DfE letter Ending Intervention and Revoking Statutory Direction

Appendix A

STATUTORY DIRECTION TO HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL IN RELATION TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

WHEREAS:

1. Having considered Ofsted's report of 21 September 2022 following its inspection of children's social care in Herefordshire, the Secretary of State for Education ("the Secretary of State") issued a direction to Herefordshire Council ("the Council") pursuant to section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 in light of inadequate performance by the Council of its children's social care functions.
2. On 11 January 2023, the Commissioner for Children's Services in Herefordshire provided a report. On 1 March 2023 a revised direction was issued.
3. The Secretary of State has now further considered the reports of the Commissioner for Children's Services in Herefordshire published 13 December 2023 and 4 December 2024 and remains satisfied that the Council is failing to perform to an adequate standard, some or all of the functions to which section 497A of the Education Act 1996 is applied by section 50 of the Children Act 2004 ("children's social care functions"), namely;
 - a) social services functions, as defined in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, so far as those functions relate to children;
 - b) the functions conferred on the Council under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989 (so far as not falling within paragraph a. above); and
 - c) the functions conferred on the Council under sections 10, 12, 12C, 12D and 17A of the Children Act 2004.
4. Eleanor Brazil has stepped down as Commissioner for Children's Services in Herefordshire ("the Children's Services Commissioner"). The Secretary of State has therefore appointed Deborah McMillan as the Children's Services Commissioner in accordance with, and for the purposes of, the terms of reference ("the Terms of Reference") set out in the Annex to this direction.
5. The Secretary of State, having considered representations made by the Council, considers it expedient, in accordance with her powers under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996, to direct the Council as set out below in order to ensure that all of the Council's children's social care functions are performed to an adequate standard.

NOW THEREFORE:

6. Pursuant to her powers under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 Act, the Secretary of State directs the Council as follows:

Appendix A

- a. To comply with any instructions of the Secretary of State, the Children's Services Commissioner in relation to the improvement of the Council's exercise of its children's social care functions and provide such assistance as either the Secretary of State or the Children's Services Commissioner may require;
- b. To co-operate with the Children's Services Commissioner, including on request allowing the Commissioner at all reasonable times access:
 - i. to any premises of the Council;
 - ii. to any document of, or relating to, the Council; and
 - iii. to any employee or member of the Council,

which appears to them to be necessary for achieving the purposes of, and carrying out the responsibilities set out in, the Terms of Reference.

- c. To provide the Children's Services Commissioner with such amenities, services and administrative support as they may reasonably require from time to time for the carrying out of their responsibilities in accordance with the Terms of Reference, including:
 - i. providing officers' time or support;
 - ii. providing office space, meeting rooms or computer facilities;
 - d. To co-operate with the Children's Services Commissioner in their work to oversee the improvement programme in children's services, and to work productively with Leeds City Council for the remainder of the agreed improvement partnership.
7. In consequence of this revised direction, the Secretary of State for Education revokes the direction dated 1 March 2023. This direction will remain in force until it is revised or revoked by the Secretary of State.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education

Dawn Dandy
A Senior Civil Servant in the Department for Education
Dated this X day of Y 2025

ANNEX**Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services****Herefordshire Council****Terms of Reference**

Herefordshire Council's children's social care services have been found to be 'inadequate' across all of the key judgements in the Ofsted inspection report of 21 September 2022.

The Children's Services Commissioner for Herefordshire is expected to take the following steps:

1. To issue any necessary instructions to the Council for the purpose of securing immediate improvement in the Council's delivery of children's social care.
2. To oversee service improvement by the Council and gather evidence to determine at six month intervals whether sufficient progress is being made to:
 - a) Strengthen the leadership of children's services to ensure that the pace of improvement increases rapidly in line with the agreed Improvement Plan.
 - b) Address the following service priorities:
 - i. Delivery of the agreed actions in the Improvement Plan.
 - ii. Improved recruitment and retention of social workers in child protection and court, and children in care teams, with a stronger focus on support through quality supervision and peer support.
 - iii. Children reporting fewer changes of social workers.
 - iv. Data quality issues successfully addressed so that there is confidence in the accuracy of performance data.
 - v. Successful implementation of locality working with positive feedback from partners and families on impact.
 - vi. Multi-agency early help arrangements in place across the county delivered in line with an agreed early help strategy.
 - vii. Progress in improving and acting on audits, and feedback from children and families.
 - viii. Evidence of restorative practice making a difference.
 - c) Resolve, as far as is possible, all outstanding historic complaints.

Appendix A

- d) Agree, with the council's partners, through a range of Strategic forums, actions which will demonstrate collectively their commitment to raising ambition and aspiration for children and young people, and responding to their views.
 - e) Work with the Local Government Association to develop the knowledge and impact of members in key roles, including the leader, lead member and scrutiny members.
- 3. To oversee the remainder of the agreed programme of improvement support with Leeds City Council.
- 4. To oversee the remainder of the programme of early help improvement and agree appropriate continuation/exit arrangements with the council and its partners.

Inspection of Herefordshire local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 10 to 21 November 2025

Lead inspector: Rebecca Dubbins, His Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of children care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Services for children in Herefordshire have significantly improved since the last inspection in 2022, when overall effectiveness was inadequate. Leaders have worked diligently, using effective partnerships to influence and improve the quality and consistency of practice. Recruitment and retention initiatives have successfully stabilised the workforce and reduced high caseloads. As a result, leaders have ensured that children and their families benefit from effective services that make a difference to their lives.

A comprehensive quality assurance framework, used effectively to measure the progress and impact of change, has enabled leaders to have an accurate understanding of the quality and impact of services delivered to children and families. An integral component of this framework is the feedback from children and families, which is responded to well. Leaders have firmly established a culture within the organisation to ensure that children are at the centre of service delivery and that the views of children and their families inform the further development of services.

What needs to improve?¹

- The management oversight of the local authority designated officer (LADO). (outcome 3, national framework)
- The identification and assessment of children living in private fostering arrangements. (outcome 3, national framework)

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. Children and families benefit from effective early help services. Well-written assessments provide an accurate picture of families' needs, with their views integral and considered well. Workers empower parents to understand their options and to access services that make a difference. Families benefit from a multi-agency network of professionals with whom they meet regularly to ensure that the support continues to be of value. When concerns increase for children, appropriate action is taken to step up to statutory services.
2. When professionals are concerned about children, they appropriately refer into the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Workers and managers in the MASH apply thresholds effectively. They consult with their partners in a timely way to ensure that appropriate information is shared, which is used well to consider next steps. Workers demonstrate an appropriate understanding of risk. As a result, children and families receive a timely and proportionate response to concerns.
3. The response to children in emergency situations out of hours is effective. Children are visited when required, and workers take their time to explain concerns and understand the views of children and their families. There is good connectivity with daytime staff to ensure a joined-up response, which allows for children and families' needs to be met whatever the time of day.
4. When children are considered to be at risk, child protection strategy discussions take place swiftly and are effective. These discussions are well attended by professionals who share relevant information about their involvement with the family. As a result, risks posed to children are identified, with an appropriate and proportionate plan made as to how the risk can be mitigated, including the decision to undertake child protection enquiries. Social workers visit children promptly after the strategy discussion, and child protection enquiries are informed by a thorough understanding of children's circumstances, which determine next steps.

¹ The areas for improvement have been cross-referenced with the outcomes, enablers or principles in the [Children's Social Care: National Framework](#). This statutory guidance sets out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children's social care.

5. Children and family assessments are timely, comprehensive and consider relevant historical information. Assessments are informed by the views of children and their families and include information from professionals. Social workers are inquisitive and demonstrate an understanding of the strengths in families, balancing this against children's presenting risks and needs. For children who are disabled, their complex needs and additional vulnerabilities are understood and responded to well. Social workers analyse this information effectively and provide a plan for intervention that is aimed at reducing risks and making a positive difference to children and families. This includes the provision of short breaks for families with disabled children when this is required.
6. When children are considered to be at risk of significant harm, child protection conferences are convened promptly and are effective. Child protection conference chairs manage these meetings well and enable a purposeful discussion, with children via advocates, parents and multi-agency professionals contributing their views. These meetings result in a clear plan aimed at reducing risks posed to children.
7. Core groups, review child protection conferences and child-in-need planning meetings are held regularly and are well attended. This provides an opportunity for up-to-date information-sharing about children and their families across relevant agencies and enables the progress of children's plans. Family Group Conferences (FGCs) are held when required to strengthen children and families' support networks. Those family members providing support are not always involved in key meetings, which limits the contribution they could make. Leaders acknowledged this and have plans to strengthen this area.
8. Most child protection and child-in-need plans identify clear actions and the support needed for children and their families. For a small number of children who have experienced neglect, the written plans do not always address the impact of cumulative harm and do not start from the lived experience of the child, resulting in plans that are adult focused. There is a renewed practice focus on children living in neglectful households, with recent interventions evidencing a positive impact on children's lives. However, for a small number of children, changes of social worker and the lack of timebound actions with explicit contingency plans mean that children and families are not always aware of what will happen and by when, in the event that children's circumstances do not improve.
9. When children's circumstances do not change and risks escalate, the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline process is strong. This provides effective oversight to ensure that families get the support they need to divert from family court proceedings and for children to remain living with their families. When it is necessary to initiate care proceedings, matters proceed swiftly to enable the necessary legal interventions required to improve children's lives.

10. Children are seen regularly by their social workers and family support workers, who are creative in how they obtain their thoughts and feelings. Children's views and wishes are evidenced throughout their written records, and workers respond to these views with care and sensitivity. As a result of this approach, children and their families are able to develop positive relationships with their workers.
11. When children aged 16 to 17 present as homeless, they receive an appropriate response, with a joint assessment undertaken with colleagues from housing services. Children are made aware of their rights, including their rights to be accommodated. They are offered an advocate and receive support to maximise their chances of remaining within their families.
12. While allegations against professionals who work with children are managed in a timely way with appropriate outcomes, there are inconsistencies in the quality of written records, which do not consistently reflect the discussions that take place or the support available and provided. Data is also limited and reliant on manual tracking. This means the service has been unable to complete a comprehensive overview of patterns, trends and outcomes of this work. Leaders have recognised this and have taken action to address this shortfall.
13. Children who take on a caring role are not always clearly recognised by statutory services, and this can mean that their needs are not sufficiently understood. Leaders were aware of this and already had arrangements in place to address this. There is a better response from early help professionals where children are supported to access services that make a difference to their lives.
14. There are very few children identified as living in a private fostering arrangement. Current arrangements to identify, assess and support children living in such arrangements are not effective. Leaders have undertaken some work to raise awareness among their own staff and with their partners. However, it is too early to see the impact of this.
15. Children who frequently go missing from home and who are at risk of exploitation receive an established and impactful response from the GETSAFE team. There are strong relationships with voluntary, statutory partners and community networks, who share intelligence and an understanding of risk and plan a joint response effectively. Risks to children reduce as a result of this work.
16. The oversight of children who are electively home educated is well organised and effective. Officers understand their roles and are proactive in engaging with families before the decision is made to educate children at home. Children's circumstances are understood well, and partners collaborate to ensure that children's safety and general welfare are considered and prioritised.

17. When children are missing education, they are monitored and supported using effective systems. This work means that children of statutory school age typically access or return to education within a short period of time.
18. The edge of care service, known as ECHO, prevents many children from entering care effectively. Skilled practitioners provide tailored interventions to support children to remain within their family networks when it is safe to do so, reducing a reliance on statutory interventions and the need for ongoing social work involvement.

The experiences and progress of children in care: good

19. Children enter care at the right time and when it is in their best interests. Children's families and wider networks are considered using FGCs. Children's voices are at the heart of these decision-making forums, conveyed through high-quality, tailored and individualised direct work. Appropriate consideration is given to the bespoke circumstances and needs of family members who look after children under a kinship care arrangement. Assessments are thorough and suitably adaptable to address the children's needs. This ensures that children can remain within their family if this is in their best interests.
20. If it is not possible for children to remain living with their families, children live in homes that meet their needs. Most children are placed locally with foster carers. If children are placed outside of Herefordshire, for example in an emergency, they continue to receive the same service from their workers who will identify a local placement that will better meet the children's needs.
21. Careful consideration is given to understanding the relationships between brothers and sisters. Family time is fully considered, balancing risks and potential benefits for each child. Social workers undertake well-considered assessments to ensure the decisions are in children's best interests.
22. Children who return to the care of their parents do so as a result of thorough assessment and planning processes, which have strong management oversight to ensure that potential risks are managed and children get the care they need.
23. Children in care benefit from positive relationships with their social workers, who visit them regularly. Children told inspectors they are well supported by their current workers. However, some have experienced too many changes in social worker, which has impacted on their ability to trust and talk openly. There has been more consistency recently, and changes have been managed well. Social workers ensure that children understand why they are in care, and they take the time to understand children's individual and diverse experiences and needs. Advocates are routinely offered to children to promote their views and wishes, and many children take up this offer. As a result, children's views were clearly evidenced and their workers responded to these well.

24. Children-in-care reviews are held regularly and are strengthened further by thorough mid-way reviews where the independent reviewing officers (IROs) oversee the progression of the care plan effectively. Children are offered the choice of whether they want to attend and/or chair their meetings. Their views are respected about who they want to attend, and IROs manage this well, meeting with parents, separately if needed, to obtain their views. The outcomes of reviews are consistently well written, directly to children, providing them with an understanding about their care plan.
25. The virtual school has robust systems and procedures in place to provide effective oversight of the education of children in care. This work is having a positive impact on the educational experiences and the progress of most children, with them making good progress from their starting points. A minority of children do not attend school regularly enough, which limits their achievement. Leaders are addressing these barriers, but there is more to do to ensure that all children engage with learning opportunities. Children in care are well supported to enjoy an array of hobbies and activities outside of school, which provides an opportunity for them to develop their skills and talents.
26. Children's health needs are regularly assessed and met. Children benefit from a wide range of services to meet their emotional well-being and physical needs. Children's complex health needs are well understood, and individualised support is provided to meet the children's changing needs. An in-house psychologist provides additional support to social workers to assist care planning. As a result, children benefit from well-considered healthcare plans.
27. Children, including those in residential care, live in appropriate homes that meet their assessed needs. Every effort is made to place children in a registered setting and, as a result, the use of unregistered children's homes is rare. On the very small number of occasions where it has not been possible to place children in a registered provision, senior managers and staff understand the processes needed to ensure that actions are taken to mitigate the risks to the child. Alternative placements are identified without avoidable delay, which has meant children have moved into registered provision swiftly.
28. Children in care who are at risk of exploitation or who go missing receive a swift and positive response from workers in the GETSAFE team, who take the time to understand possible contributing factors. These workers join the multi-agency team around the child to manage and reduce risks to children effectively.
29. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are supported by their workers to make good progress. Children's individual needs are considered well, and they are placed in homes with these needs in mind.

30. Leaders set expectations that children should achieve permanence in a timely way and have systems in place to ensure this. Special guardianship orders (SGOs) are made when it is in children's best interests, and carers and families are well supported and included in planning for these. However, there has been some confusion in the SGO financial offer and how long this support is provided for, which has dissuaded some carers from pursuing this. This has impacted on potential permanence for children. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action to ensure that carers are informed and that workers can explain the full extent of the offer to carers.
31. Foster carers, including kinship carers, are supported well with improved training opportunities. However, the unique needs of kinship carers are not accommodated in this generalised training.
32. Adoption practice is strong. As a result of collaborative working practices with the regional adoption agency (Adoption Central England), children, families and prospective adopters are prepared well and receive appropriate support both before and after the making of an adoption order. Children are placed for adoption in a timely way, with direct contact with their birth family in place for a small number of children, enabling them to achieve permanence but retain connections to their birth family.
33. Support is in place for older children as they reach adulthood and transition to the leaving care team. Children are well supported to understand their entitlements and make plans for their future.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: good

34. Care leavers in Herefordshire receive a strong service from their personal advisers (PAs), who are allocated in a timely way for children. This enables children to develop relationships with their PAs, who help them understand their options and entitlements before they leave care.
35. PAs demonstrate curiosity and commitment to understanding young people's experiences, concerns and aspirations. They are sensitive to the complexities of family relationships and provide proactive support while appropriately promoting independence. Care leavers benefit from regular communication and visits from their workers, which are purposeful and tailored to their individual needs. PAs take pride in the achievements of care leavers and consistently convey warmth and compassion in their work. Many care leavers view their PAs as dependable and responsive, particularly during times of stress. While some care leavers have experienced changes in workers, they speak highly of their current PAs.
36. Care leavers participate in their pathway reviews, and pathway plans reflect care leavers' wishes and aspirations. Written plans are clear, with achievable actions, and include meaningful support to help young people reach their

goals. PAs use creative engagement strategies for those young people who are reluctant to participate, ensuring support is offered when needed.

37. The health needs of care leavers are understood by their PAs, who support care leavers to be healthy and work effectively with professionals to secure timely support, including mental health interventions when this is required.
38. The local authority's offer for care leavers is clear and comprehensive and is equitable for those living out of area, with a specific focus on care leavers with additional needs. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors were aware of their entitlements, and this is evidenced throughout their written records.
39. Former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children continue to receive tailored support into adulthood that recognises their unique needs. Their immigration status is addressed early to help to reduce stress and uncertainty about the future. Many care leavers from abroad are placed out of area, which offers benefits such as access to diverse communities but also creates some challenges regarding housing availability and living a distance from their PA. The limited English for speakers of other languages provision in Herefordshire is a challenge, which means that those care leavers who choose to return to the area, must travel to access these courses. Leaders are encouraging growth in college-based classes, and new courses are planned for January 2026.
40. The number of care leavers in custody is positively low. These care leavers benefit from regular visits from their PAs. They build trusted relationships, which enables them to discuss their experiences, future and the support they need. Support for prison discharge is considered early, even when the planned date for discharge is beyond the age of 25.
41. Care leavers who are parents receive support to access universal services. Their PAs help them to understand safeguarding concerns so that there are no unwanted surprises, and the PAs work collaboratively with their child's social worker when there are concerns. As a result, care leavers receive a network of support to be the best parents they can be.
42. Vulnerable care leavers at risk of exploitation are supported by their PA and benefit from the involvement of a worker from the GETSAFE team, who use their expertise and work well with the care leavers' network to reduce risks.
43. Care leavers who are disabled receive support from workers from the 'Young Adults' team, who work with care leavers' PAs. For a few of these care leavers, the decision and plan for where they will live are not always in place well before their 18th birthday. This does not provide the certainty care leavers need to be assured about where they will be living. Leaders are aware of this and are working with colleagues to address this.
44. Care leavers are supported by persistent and creative PAs to access training and employment opportunities in line with their needs. Written records reflect

the attempts made by PAs to encourage and consistently guide care leavers in their chosen field of study or work. This is regularly revisited, and support is offered through various means, including work coaches. As a result, there are more care leavers accessing education, employment and training. However, leaders are committed to further increasing these numbers.

45. Care leavers live in accommodation that is of a suitable standard in areas where they feel safe. This is reflected in written records and expressed by care leavers themselves. 'Staying put' and 'staying close' arrangements enable increasing numbers of care leavers to remain with their foster carers and move at a time more suitable for them. There is effective oversight by leaders to ensure that care leavers' accommodation needs are met to prevent delays for young people moving into new accommodation. Start-up grants and support with independent living skills help care leavers set up and maintain safe, good-quality homes.
46. The support available to care leavers after the age of 21 remains in place unless they opt out, with their needs and wishes determining their ongoing support. As a result, many young people continue to be supported by their PA. For those who do not need or desire this, a named PA maintains a level of contact to ensure that care leavers know how to request support when they need help or advice. When care leavers do contact the service, they get a friendly and caring response.
47. Care leavers have opportunities to contribute to service development. Those who spoke to inspectors told us that they feel their voices and contributions are heard and they have influenced action taken.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding

48. A visible and effective leadership team, supported by corporate and political leaders, has enabled vast improvements in the services delivered to children and their families. Since the appointment of the Corporate Director of Children's Services in July 2024, who is aspirational for children and committed to enhancing their lives, improvements have been made at pace.
49. A permanent and stable management team has driven the changes needed, cultivating a positive environment. Senior leaders have nurtured and coached their teams to deliver improvements and good practice, leading by example. A concise and coherent improvement plan has been embraced by leaders at all levels and owned by frontline staff, who understand their role in the changes needed. The expectations of senior leaders are communicated well, driving practice improvements. The improvement board is well attended, demonstrating the commitment of senior leaders and partners to improve services.

50. The chief executive, leader of the council and lead member are fully engaged in the improvement plan, providing necessary support and challenge when needed. Children's services are rightly considered to be a high priority for the council. Leaders have ensured that the voice of children across Herefordshire informs all the council's strategies, so they appreciate the impact for children of local developments. As a result, leaders understand the needs of children in Herefordshire and have an accurate assessment of how well services are meeting their needs.
51. Leaders are effective corporate parents and understand what children in care and care leavers need. Their ambitious and child-focused approach has ensured that children's voices are sought and heard. There are numerous examples of how children have shared their experiences, via the youth voice group or from surveys undertaken, and children are included in service redesign. As a result, leaders, partners and frontline staff understand what it is like to be a child in care. Surveys are very well responded to with mostly positive feedback. Leaders respond to ensure that issues raised by children are addressed swiftly, evidencing the leadership team's oversight and commitment to get it right for children. Children's achievements are celebrated by their corporate parents.
52. Leaders have improved the offer for care leavers, which provides a wide range of support, such as council tax exemptions, driving lessons, gym membership and funding to set up their first home. This ensures that children who leave care are not disadvantaged, whether they live in Herefordshire or are out of area.
53. Strategic partnerships are now mature, with a shared vision to improve children's outcomes. A jointly owned quality assurance process enables partners to work together to address key themes with positive impact. The effectiveness of strategic partnerships has been reflected operationally in the multi-agency teams in the MASH and in how partners work together to meet children's needs. Governance arrangements have improved. As a result, the partnership has an accurate understanding of the needs of children in Herefordshire, with joint commissioning arrangements established to meet these needs.
54. Leaders have a clear plan in place to manage changes needed as a result of the social care reforms. The plan has been well considered, with the foundations in place as a result of the move to a locality model, and governance arrangements established to oversee ongoing developments. The strength of partnerships provides confidence that these changes can be delivered effectively.
55. Senior leaders understand their sufficiency issues well, and the strategy is informed by the needs of Herefordshire children. Leaders have secured financial investment to create more accommodation options for children in care and care leavers, which includes ongoing commissioning to increase the

range of children's homes available. More foster carers have been recruited and retained, which, comparable to national trends, is impressive. This has meant that most children are placed locally and with foster carers.

56. Planning includes the input of children, young people and their families to ensure that services are co-produced. Parents in Herefordshire have previously been vocal in challenging poor practice. Leaders have taken the time to understand this by commissioning an external review and have acknowledged when services were not good enough. Learning from this, leaders have taken proactive steps by establishing a group of parent representatives, 'Families Making a Difference'. The parents in this group have worked alongside children's services to provide their views and experiences and have engaged in co-production, informing service changes going forwards. Systems have been established to gain feedback at the point of closure, and an impressive number of families have provided positive feedback about services. This shows the commitment leaders have to understanding how their services are making a difference. This is used effectively to learn and improve services, delivering tangible and positive impact for children.
57. The local authority quality assurance framework is comprehensive, robust and allows leaders to have a line of sight into the quality of practice and children's experiences. This is informed by feedback from children and their families from a variety of sources and performance information. An improved use of data and performance information has increased senior leaders' understanding. Leaders use data to continually test and probe services, giving an accurate picture and providing assurance.
58. As a result of this effective quality assurance programme, leaders are aware of the strengths in their services and the areas for further development. While the effectiveness of the LADO role and the oversight of children living in private fostering arrangements needs to improve, leaders had already put arrangements in place to address this.
59. Management oversight from managers at all tiers is reflected in children's records, demonstrating an evidence-based rationale for further action. Supervision records show explorative and reflective discussions and a thorough understanding of children's circumstances, which positively impact on care planning. There is an admirable consistency of high-quality supervision across all service areas, which reflects the training and development leaders continue to provide to managers.
60. Having a stable workforce has and continues to be a priority for senior leaders. At the time of the last inspection, high numbers of agency staff were needed to fill social work vacancies. These numbers have reduced significantly as leaders have invested in 'grow your own' routes into social work and successfully used media campaigns to recruit social workers to Herefordshire. Positive changes in culture and inclusive practice have also enabled staff retention, resulting in more permanent social workers and a reduction in the

turnover of staff. While inspectors saw the negative impact for some children who had experienced changes of workers, this was largely being mitigated well through sensitive engagement by their new workers. In recent months, increased consistency has made a positive difference for children.

61. Leaders have managed change exceptionally well, which has included a move to locality services. Changes are communicated effectively to frontline staff via staff conferences and team and service meetings. The workforce has responded positively to this, with many practitioners able to talk about improvements and the difference these have made for them as workers. They recognise these improvements in their reduced caseloads and the resources now available for the children and families they work with, providing additionality to their work.
62. Frontline staff benefit from regular training, and managers have benefited from a tailored leadership programme. Newly qualified workers benefit from a very structured programme, supported by the academy, to ensure that they can develop at a pace that is right for them. Workers spoken to stated they enjoyed working for Herefordshire. They reported that they felt supported, equipped and safe to do their work, with their managers creating a positive environment for them. The workforce understands and shares the aspirations of leaders to hear the voice of children and their families and to do the very best for children. Inspectors saw this consistently reflected in children's records across all service areas.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This report is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026

Progress Report to the Minister of State for Children and Families on Children Services in Herefordshire

Deborah McMillan

DfE appointed Commissioner for Herefordshire Children's Services

25 May 2026

The findings from the Ofsted Inspection of Herefordshire Local Authority Children's Services in November 2025 (published January 2026) have served as a pivotal health check for my final review. Ofsted confirmed that Herefordshire Children's Services' overall effectiveness is good, with an outstanding judgement for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families. This culture of methodical and systematic improvement represents a significant shift away from the more crisis driven culture of the past.

This report focuses on three key themes that demonstrate sustained improvement within children's services.

1. Sustaining Service Improvement: Are effective arrangements in place?

Ofsted explicitly praised the refreshed and appropriately targeted Phase Three Improvement Plan: *'A concise and coherent improvement plan has been embraced by leaders at all levels and owned by frontline staff, who understand their role in the changes needed.'*

'The chief executive, leader of the council and lead member are fully engaged in the improvement plan, providing necessary support and challenge when needed. Children's services are rightly considered to be a high priority for the council.'

Six months on from the inspection, the Phase Three Improvement Plan has been fully embedded within Children's Services' business planning and is now delivered as part of business-as-usual. The Improvement Board was stood down in January 2026, as effective oversight, challenge, and accountability are now provided through existing governance structures, including the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). These arrangements are robust and well-established.

Independent Scrutiny and External Assurance

Alongside strengthened internal governance, the service has benefited from a range of external scrutiny mechanisms:

- **Peer reviews** confirm the robustness of practice and leadership.
- **Independent audits** commissioned by the council demonstrate sustained improvement in decision-making, supervision, and planning.
- The **Independent Scrutineer** of the Safeguarding Children Partnership provides assurance that multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are strong, mature, and compliant with statutory guidance.
- **Benchmarking** against statistical neighbours shows Herefordshire's performance trajectory is now aligned with, or exceeding, comparable authorities.

This independent validation provides confidence that improvements are real, embedded, and sustainable.

Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Safeguarding Children Partnership has sustained and strengthened its improvement activity, having fully addressed previous areas for development. It now operates with greater consistency, stronger use of data, and more effective multi-agency working. Quality assurance is fully embedded and there is a strong performance reporting routine. Audit and training processes focus on partnership impact.

Social Care Reform

Herefordshire Council are engaging proactively with the reform agenda. The Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP) implementation plan is welcomed by partners and strengthening local relationships, supporting the delivery of social care reforms. There is an effective programme management function overseeing implementation, and at present we should be confident about full operation of the FFP model by the March 2027 deadline.

A Plan on a Page for 2026/27 has been developed to describe how social care reforms, SEND reforms, corporate parenting business plan, SCP priorities and the CYPSP, function together to:

- Strengthen family help pathways and preventative services
- Expanding local placement options and specialist provision
- Deepen co-production with children, young people, and families
- Redefine quality assurance to focus on impact and outcomes through analysis of performance indicators, audits and child and family feedback
- Embed Child Friendly Herefordshire across all departments and partners
- Maintain workforce stability through development and progression

These priorities reflect a forward-looking and mature approach to continuous improvement.

Voice of Children and Families

Children's voices are increasingly shaping service design, practice development, and strategic priorities, with clear evidence of meaningful engagement across the system.

Financial Sustainability

The sustainability of improvement is underpinned by a strengthened financial strategy:

- Improved budget discipline and reduced historical overspend.
- A refreshed placement sufficiency strategy reducing reliance on high-cost external placements.
- Investment in family help and edge-of-care services supporting long-term demand reduction.
- Medium-Term Financial Plan modelling showing a more predictable and manageable cost envelope.

Assurance on Impact and Risk

Sustained improvement is demonstrated not only through inspection findings but through clear, measurable progress in key performance and quality indicators. 2025/26 performance data evidence the impact of strengthened leadership, practice consistency, and governance maturity on outcomes for children and families. Strategic risks are routinely monitored through established governance structures, ensuring early identification and swift action.

2. Addressing Specific Ofsted Findings

In January 2026, Ofsted updated Herefordshire's status from inadequate to good, with outstanding for the impact of leaders on social work. This, alongside positive monitoring visits — notably the 6th and 7th visits in 2025 — demonstrates clear and sustainable improvement.

The ILACS report identified two areas for development:

- Management oversight of the LADO function
- Identification and assessment of children living in private fostering arrangements

Inspectors noted that leaders were already aware of these issues and had arrangements in place to address them. The service has since reviewed the ILACS feedback and identified a further eight areas of focus. All ten areas now form the Ofsted Action Plan, endorsed by the Council's Children's Scrutiny Panel and incorporated into the 2026/27 Business Plan. I have already seen progress across all these areas, and Ofsted's specific concerns have substantively been addressed.

The adoption of **Child Friendly Herefordshire** as a corporate policy further demonstrates a mature, system-wide commitment to sustainable, child-centred practice. Child Friendly Herefordshire means creating a county where children and young people are **safe, heard, valued, and able to thrive**, with organisations and communities working together to put their needs and voices at the heart of decision-making.

3. Stable and Committed Leadership

A new Chief Executive has been appointed and will take up post in mid-June 2026. The current Chief Executive leaves later in June with transition meetings planned. While the corporate centre is in transition, the Leader of the Council, Lead Member, the Director of Children's Services and the senior leadership team continue to provide the stability required to maintain service improvements.

Ofsted noted that social workers feel '*safer and less anxious*' due to stable leadership and management. The senior leadership team works effectively together and acts as a buffer, ensuring that the Chief Executive recruitment and induction process will not distract from frontline practice nor disrupt the improvement trajectory.

The Leader of the Council will ensure that the new Chief Executive maintains the rigorous level of executive oversight required to sustain the recent improvements. Quartet meetings will continue involving the Chief Executive, Leader, Lead Member and DCS to ensure needs of children and young people are recognised and prioritised.

The Leader has articulated mechanisms that he will continue to monitor to provide assurance that the system remains highly effective, safe, and robust against any regression:

- Good transition arrangements
- A clear set of directions provided to the new Chief Executive
- Continuing to empower the children's services leadership team
- KPI dashboards and independent oversight will remain transparent
- Children's Services to remain a political, permanent high priority risk rather than a completed task

These arrangements provide confidence that the transition will be well managed and avoid any disruption to children's service delivery and improvement.

Recommendation

Based on the evidence presented, it is my view that Herefordshire Children's Services has demonstrated sustained, embedded, and measurable improvement. The conditions that led to statutory intervention have been addressed, and the service now operates with strong leadership, effective governance, and a clear focus on children's outcomes. Herefordshire Local Authority are committed to the national reform programme and are well advanced in implementing the FFP model.

Based on the points addressed above, I am happy to recommend that the Statutory Direction is revoked and the formal intervention in Herefordshire Children's Social Care be brought to an end.

Deborah McMillan



Department for Education

Josh MacAlister OBE MP
Minister for Children and Families

Councillor Jonathan Lester
Herefordshire Council,
Plough Lane,
Hereford HR4 0LE

By email: jonathan.lester@herefordshire.gov.uk

17 July 2026

Dear Councillor Lester,

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL: ENDING INTERVENTION AND REVOKING STATUTORY DIRECTION

I am writing further to my letter of 13 February 2026.

I have received Deborah McMillan's final report as children's services commissioner to Herefordshire. It comprehensively addresses the points I raised regarding Herefordshire's continued commitment to service improvement, engagement with the national reforms to children's social care, and to ensuring a stable transition of senior executive leadership in the council.

I was delighted to read of the progress made since inspection, to continue to improve services, and of your progress in implementing the wider children's social care reforms as part of your ambitions for Herefordshire's children.

In particular I am grateful, Councillor, for your personal commitment to continue to closely monitor performance in children's services. Continuing to prioritise children's services and providing key direction to that effect will bring clarity as Paul Satoor begins his new role as your chief executive.

On the basis of both these assurances and the progress demonstrated through inspection and since, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to end the DfE's statutory intervention. I have asked my officials to publish the Commissioner's report and revoke the Statutory Direction to the council. Once this is complete, the intervention will formally conclude, and officials will confirm the necessary updates to the relevant GOV.UK pages.

I would like to thank you, your team, and your partners for all your work on behalf of the young people you serve. I would also like to thank Deborah for her support as well as Eleanor Brazil and Gladys Rhodes White for the direction and help they provided previously.

You will be well aware of the effort behind this progress. You should be proud of what has been achieved, while remaining focused on sustaining and building on this improvement – in particular I am sure you will share my desire to ensure that more children are supported to remain safely within their family networks, and recognise the importance of bringing service budgets more closely in line with comparable services elsewhere.

Please continue to engage with your CSC Area Lead, John Bostock. I look forward to hearing more about your progress as you implement the Families First reforms in the run up to March 2027.

I am copying this letter to Councillor Ivan Powell (Cabinet Member for Children and Families), Paul Satoor and Paul Walker (respectively incoming and outgoing Chief Executive, Herefordshire Council), Tina Russell (Director of Children's Services), Deborah McMillan (Commissioner), and Eleanor Brazil and Gladys Rhodes White (respectively former commissioner and former improvement adviser).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Josh MacAlister', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Josh MacAlister MP
Minister for Children and Families

Herefordshire Children's Services Business Plan 2026 - 2028

The Children and Young People Strategic partnership have set a vision for children and young people of Herefordshire - This wide partnership of people and agencies will monitor how we achieve this vision through a coordination of meetings, measures and data sharing review and collaborative challenge through 26/27/28

Quality Assurance – Audit Activity
Understanding quality of practice

Quality Assurance – KPIs
Timeliness of workload and workflow

Council Delivery Plan

Child Friendly
Herefordshire
**Best start in
life**
SEND Reforms
Family Hubs
Youth Strategy
**Alternative
Provision**
School capital
Families First

Regional Children's Services

Sector led
improvement

Workforce

Youth
Remand
Reforms

Placement
Sufficiency
(Safe Centre /
Regional Care
Cooperative)

Ofsted Action Plan

Local Authority
Designated
Officer (LADO)
Neglect
Family Group
Decision Making
Young Carers
UASC
Kinship Support
Private Fostering
**Attendance for
children in care**

Children's Safeguarding Partnership Business Plan 26/27

Neglect
**Police inspection
action plan**
**Probation
Inspection action
plan**
Quality Assurance
Ofsted plan

Welfare and Schools Act 2026

Families
First &
Multi
Agency
Child
Protection
**SEND
Reforms**
Education
Reforms

SEND Inspection Action Plan

Reduce waiting
times
**Inform on health
support services**
Improve the
health workforce
**Ensure quality
information on
services is
available**

Corporate Parenting business plan

Homes & Housing
Health & Wellbeing
Listening, Hearing
& Understanding
Learning and Fun
Relationship / identity and
belonging
Safe & Protected
Independence & Adulthood

Delivering best value through sound financial planning and spend in all that we do

Childrens Services Operational Priorities 26/27

Workforce – Sustaining permanency / Alternative Pathways / Apprenticeships – Lead Service Director Rachel Gillott

Quality Assurance – KPI / Audit/Feedback – Lead Head of Service Suzie Simms

New Short Breaks – Lead Service Director Tori Lynch

Co-production and participation – Lead Head of Service Suzie Simms

Practice Priorities: Sexual Abuse Lead / Neglect Lead / Domestic Abuse / Anti-discriminatory practice – Directorate Leadership

Mosaic data and reporting – Lead HoS Amanda Sherrard / SM's Dawn Knight / Vicky Leader / Claire Peet

Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers
Understanding the impact of what we do and developing services through coproduction



Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Report by: Cabinet member economy and growth;

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan
- b) To delegate to the Director for Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth, the ability to make any final minor amendments to the Economic Delivery Plan in finalising for publication
- c) To delegate to the Director for Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth, any operational decisions required to implement the Plan.

Alternative options

1. To not approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan. The Big Economic Delivery Plan has been developed by the Economy and Place Partnership Board, with engagement from partners and

stakeholders across the county. To not approve the plan would leave the county without a focussed and targeted approach to support the growth of Herefordshire.

Key considerations

2. The Herefordshire Economic Plan ([2050 Economic Plan](#)) was considered by cabinet in January 2023 ([Decision - Big Economic Plan - Herefordshire Council](#)). It sets our long-term 2050 aspiration for Herefordshire, including a vision for the county to be an exemplar 21st century rural economy.
3. Two of the key recommendations in the Economic Plan are to form an overarching Economy and Place Partnership Board to oversee implementation, through establishing a clear delivery plan identifying critical actions, timescales and lead organisations.
4. The Economy and Place Board was formed in 2024. Chaired by the Leader of the council it brings together the Chairs/ representatives of the Herefordshire Business Growth Board, the Skills Board, the Herefordshire Environment Board, the Cultural Partnership, and the Community Partnership. The Board provides strategic oversight and direction, and co-ordinates the wider county partnerships in seeking to catalyse growth, and create better paid jobs for local people.
5. Once formed the Economy and Place Board initiated and has led the development of the Big Economic Delivery Plan (appendix 1), a route map to achieving the overarching vision in the Economic Plan. The development of the Delivery Plan has included extensive engagement with partners, in particular those groups and their wider networks represented on the Economy and Place Board. This has included a review of delivery against the Economic Plan launched in 2023, and a review of extensive changes in national and local priorities in the intervening period. For example, the launch of the National Industrial Strategy, the Defence Industrial Strategy, government setting a c30,000 mandatory housing development target for the county, and changing priorities in the Council Plan 2024 to 2027 such as a commitment to major new infrastructure in the Hereford Growth Corridor.
6. The Big Economic Delivery Plan identifies four core themes;
 - I. Place - *Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment*
 - II. People and Communities - *Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges*
 - III. Business Growth - *Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges*
 - IV. Infrastructure - *Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county*
7. The Plan includes the cross-cutting delivery principles of ensuring sustainability, maximising investment and delivering through partnership working, ensuring that we retain a focus on the environment and collaboration.
8. Each theme identifies specific priorities and priority actions, supplemented by a more detailed annex (appendix 2) which details how the action will be delivered, the lead partner, outcomes and timescales.

9. The Big Economic Delivery Plan is a partnership document for the county, developed by partners, with aspirations of implementation through collaboration with partners. This decision seeks cabinet's approval to adopt the Plan on behalf of the council, and a commitment to lead and progress our delivery actions.

Community impact

10. The Big Economic Delivery Plan has been developed by partners including community representatives.
11. The Council Plan 2024 to 2028 identifies the Herefordshire Economic 2050 Plan as a key council strategy. 'Growth' is one of four priority areas in the Council Plan and states *'We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county. We want to attract inward investment, create more jobs, enable housing development and provide the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward'*.
12. All of the 'Growth' related actions in the Council Plan Delivery Plan are included in, and will be delivered through, the Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan.

Environmental impact

13. Sustainability and the environment are key cross cutting delivery principles, considered in each theme. The Climate and Nature Partnership are represented on the Economy and Place Board, and have been consulted during the development of the Delivery Plan.

Equality duty

14. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
15. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have a low impact for equality
16. Due to the potential impact of this decision being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision about this activity/project:
 - a. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken for each new activity brought forward in implementing the Delivery Plan
 - b. The Economy and Place Board will maintain oversight of the delivery of the Plan through quarterly reporting, including how related actions considered the needs of people who have different protected characteristics have different needs, experiences, issues or priorities.

Resource implications

17. There are no new resource implications for the council in the adopting the Delivery Plan. The council actions identified are already part of funded projects or service delivery, or are focussed on lobbying government to seek the longer term infrastructural investment critical to enabling growth.

Legal implications

18. The Hereford Economic Plan (2050 Economic Plan) is an economic development strategy that provides the priorities, policy and aims of the Council and partners by 2050. Clearly, the Big Economic Delivery Plan is the plan to implement that strategy.
19. The Economic Plan forms part of the current policy framework of the Council where the delivery plan provides the aspirations to deliver to the aims of the Economic Plan. The approval of the delivery plan indicates the Council's intention to achieve the stated aims.
20. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

The following are consider to be the key risks;

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Failure to implement the Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan	The Plan has been developed through extensive engagement with partners, and overseen by local leaders on the Economy and Place Board. Partners have identified the key actions, are committed to the delivery of their respective elements. The council related actions are also identified for delivery in the Council Plan 2024 to 2027.
Failure to secure the resources to deliver actions in the plan	The majority of actions reflect short term local priorities that are already resourced. Where actions require government funding, we are continuing to lobby government for funds. For example, the Chair of the Business Growth Board is regularly meeting government ministers and departments to seek replacement for UK Shared Prosperity Funding.
Change in national or local policy/ priorities such as the creation of a Foundational Strategic Authority (FSA)	The Delivery Pan reflects the local priorities in the Council Plan 2024 to 2027, and new national policy such as the National Industrial Strategy, in seeking to achieve the long term ambitions for 2050. The Delivery Plan has been developed alongside an evidence base considering sub-regional strengths, and in particular is aligned to the defence and security cluster strengths and opportunities in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, our preferred FSA area.

Consultees

21. A Political Group Consultation (PGC) will be held on the 20th July 2026. A range of helpful comments were made during the PGC. There was broad support for the need to support the development of the county's economy and to support existing industry to grow, whilst also catalysing the development of new higher paid jobs for local people. It was commented that the Delivery Plan could better reflect the role of the market towns as focal points for access to services and employment. It would be helpful to clarify the focus on AI in supporting businesses and skills development. The overarching strategy and Economy and Place Board should also consider new longer term strategic priorities such as the proposed Ross on Wye to Gloucester rail link. The meeting also discussed the need to better align employment driven skills needs with education and skills provision and the important role the new skills strategy will play (one of the actions in the Delivery Plan).

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Big Economic Delivery Plan

Appendix 2 – Big Economic Delivery Plan Annex

Background papers

None identified

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report



The Big Economic Delivery Plan

Developed on behalf of Herefordshire Council



Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Foreword	6
3	Introduction and context	7
	Policy and delivery environment update	8
	Herefordshire: Place and Economy	9
4	Our four delivery themes	10
	Delivering in Place	11
	Delivering for our People and Communities	13
	Delivering on Business Growth	15
	Delivering on Infrastructure	17
5	Next steps and delivery principles	19
	Annex I: Funding opportunities review	22
	Annex II: Progress Update on the Big Economic Plan	24

1 Executive Summary

The Big Economic Delivery Plan provides a focused, medium-term roadmap to deliver the long-term ambitions set out in Herefordshire's Big Economic Plan (BEP). The BEP, launched in 2023, establishes the 2050 vision for Herefordshire as a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable rural economy. This Delivery Plan translates that vision into prioritised, actionable steps for the next three years and reflects the changes necessary to accommodate the increased mandated housing targets.

Strategic Context

The Plan is shaped by a rapidly changing national environment, including:

- A new UK Industrial Strategy prioritising high growth sectors
- Increasing emphasis on devolution and locally led growth funding
- Significantly higher housing delivery requirements
- Growing focus on skills, economic inactivity, and workforce participation
- The need for improved infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity, particularly in rural areas

These dynamics present opportunities for Herefordshire and have been the focus for sustained growth.

Vision and Delivery Framework

The Delivery Plan focusses on a smaller number of high-impact actions that are locally led, whilst recognising the constraints on resources, particularly the end of UK Shared Prosperity Funding in 2026.

To improve focus and accountability, the plan consolidates previous priorities into four delivery themes:

1. **Place** – Creating attractive, sustainable places through housing, regeneration, and cultural investment.
2. **People and Communities** – Building a skilled, inclusive workforce aligned to future economic needs.
3. **Business Growth** – Supporting innovation, investment, and expansion of high-value sectors.
4. **Infrastructure** – Delivering transport, digital, and energy systems that enable growth.

These are underpinned by cross-cutting principles of sustainability, partnership working, and maximising investment.

Key Priorities and Actions

Across the four themes, the plan identifies a focused set of priority interventions:

- **Place:** Accelerating housing delivery, implementing the Hereford City Masterplan, enhancing cultural assets (e.g. museum redevelopment), and addressing environmental constraints such as nutrient neutrality.
- **People and Communities:** Developing a new Employment and Skills Strategy, strengthening local skills pathways (including apprenticeships and youth support), and promoting digital and AI skills adoption.
- **Business Growth:** Expanding strategic employment sites (e.g. Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park), attracting inward investment, supporting agri-tech and high-tech sectors, and enabling businesses to scale through innovation.
- **Infrastructure:** Progressing major projects such as the Western Growth Corridor and Transport Hub, improving rail and bus connectivity, expanding EV charging, and enhancing digital and energy infrastructure.

Delivery and Governance

Implementation will begin immediately and strong collaboration with partners overseen by the Economy and Place Board with key partnerships such as the Skills Board, and Business Growth Board leading the delivery of the actions.

Funding and Investment

The plan highlights the importance of leveraging a mix of local resources, national programmes, and emerging devolved funding opportunities. As traditional funding streams end, future delivery will increasingly depend on attracting private investment, engaging with new national institutions, and funding mechanisms.

Conclusion

The Big Economic Delivery Plan sets out a clear, realistic, and partnership-driven programme for the next three years. By focusing on a small number of strategic priorities across place, people, business, and infrastructure, it aims to unlock sustainable economic growth, improve living standards, and position Herefordshire as a leading rural economy on the path to its 2050 vision.

The Plan on a Page

Delivering the 2050 Herefordshire Vision: A vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit at all stages of life

Owned and overseen by the Herefordshire Economy and Place Board

Place: Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment

Flagship action: Cement Hereford's status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre, accelerating delivery of the Hereford Museum and Shirehall and developing a Cultural Strategy to boost local Creative Industries

- Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy
- Implement the Hereford City Masterplan
- Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes
- Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements
- Support developers to bring forward private phosphate mitigation schemes
- Implement the Pride in Place Programme for Hereford South West

People and Communities: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges

Flagship action: Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration with our local partners, including colleges, NMITE and training providers, with delivery through the Skills Board

- Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability
- Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships
- Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations
- Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working
- Review usage of planning gain (S106) and procurement levers to align with skills needs

Delivery partner:
Skills Board

Business Growth: Growing and innovative businesses increasing investment, productivity and prosperity for residents

Flagship action: Deliver and attract investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park, concluding construction and developing a Placement Strategy to attract firms in high-value, high-growth sectors like agri-technology

- Develop our local inward investment offer and maximise the value of the Enterprise Zone
- Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes
- Secure Government Investment in Defence & Security
- Support Herefordshire's businesses to scale up, including through AI activities

Delivery partner:
Business Growth Board

Infrastructure: Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county

Flagship action: Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases, unlocking of substantial additional housing growth through the Local Plan

- Support delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub, doubling Hereford to Worcester frequency
- Deliver Electric Vehicle charging facilities across the county
- Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas
- Deliver BSIP Funding and review public transport access to employment opportunities
- Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub

Underpinned by our delivery principles: Sustainability, investment and partnership working

2 Foreword

[placeholder suggested to be a joint statement by Economy and Place Board]

Suggested content:

- Vision for Herefordshire and the purpose of the Big Economic Plan
- Changing national context
- Commitment to maintaining momentum behind the plan, including with partners

[This section will highlight select priority actions, to be agreed with input from Board members, for example:

*We will develop our physical and digital infrastructure, making Herefordshire a better place to live, to work, and to start and grow a business. **Central to this will be progressing the Hereford Western Growth Corridor.** In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase of the bypass, linking the A49 and A465 south of Hereford. We will develop a Western Growth Corridor Masterplan, setting out our longer-term proposition to further enhance Hereford's infrastructure requirements, which will unlock crucial housing growth in the city.*

*We will enrich our rural and urban places, with sustainable growth that meets housing demand, while protecting our rich natural environment. **Central to this will be refining and promoting our cultural offerings.** In three years, we will have delivered our redeveloped Hereford Museum & Art Gallery, cementing our status as a place where people want to visit.*

*We will prioritise our people and communities, developing pathways for our young people and meeting the needs of workers of all ages. **Central to this will be developing our Skills Strategy, shaped by partners in the Skills Board.***

*We will support all businesses with the tools they need to grow, and we will make Herefordshire an attractive place for investment. **Central to this will be delivering the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park.** In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase, filling plots with businesses in our key growth sectors, and creating jobs for local people. We will continue to develop our overarching inward investment offer, drawing on our unique strengths in cyber, defence and security and agrifood.]*

3 Introduction and context

The Big Economic Plan sets our long-term aspiration for Herefordshire; this document is the route map to get us there. The [Herefordshire Big Economic Plan](#) (BEP) launched in 2023 and sets out a vision for Herefordshire as an exemplar 21st century rural economy.

In the drafting of the Big Economic Plan, we collected evidence and drew on substantial engagement from a wide variety of stakeholders to set priorities for the county up until 2050. The high volume of actions within the original BEP requires a clearly sequenced and quantified delivery plan. We now need to translate the long-term strategy into prioritised delivery – what do we need to do first to unlock greatest positive impact for our people, businesses and places?

The purpose and objectives of this document

This document sets out a focused delivery plan. It functions as a companion document to the Big Economic Plan, setting out actions for the next 3 years under four themes of Infrastructure, People, Business, and Place.

Figure 1. Function of the Big Economic Delivery Plan

This is...	It is not...
• A medium-term delivery plan for the Big Economic Plan – focused on the next 3 years • Small number of priorities and actions – that Herefordshire can own, partner and influence • Mindful of available resource (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Funding ending in 2026), and existing levers available at the local level	• A full reworking of the Big Economic Plan • A comprehensive new evidence base • A detailed delivery plan for the activities of the Skills Board (although it will set broad priorities)

Timing and scope of plan

This plan will operate over the next three years, aligned with Herefordshire’s collaborative governance. It will utilise current and future funding resources, as set out in the final chapter of this delivery plan, and is designed to be evaluated and refreshed on a rolling basis.

Figure 2. Delivery of the Herefordshire BEP timeline



Policy and delivery environment update

We designed the BEP to be agile to respond to the changing economic and policy context. This is particularly important for this delivery plan. The national policy environment has seen significant development since the launch of the BEP, with implications for delivery.



Sectors prioritised through UK Industrial Strategy

The government has adopted [a new Industrial Strategy](#), and the Defence Industrial Strategy as an engine for growth. The county is well placed to benefit from both of these strategies through our existing strengths in defence, cyber, advanced manufacturing, autonomous systems and innovation linked to NMITE.



An expanded role for UK Public Financial Institutions

A significant proportion of this additional capital is being routed through Public Financial Institutions such as the National Wealth Fund or the Office for Investment, which are set to play a central role in government efforts to crowd in private finance.



Devolution an increasingly significant lever for places

National policy has also [continued to move towards deeper devolution](#), expanding powers and funding. With UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) ending after the 2025/26 financial year, replacement and additional funding streams (e.g., Local Growth Fund) are likely to be channelled through mayoral authorities; an opportunity and a challenge for Herefordshire.



Housing delivery a pressing short-term priority

[Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#) increased Herefordshire's housing requirement from 16k new homes to 27.5k over twenty years. Delivering housing for local people and to attract more skilled workers is a core consideration in our growth plans.



New routes to action on economic inactivity and skills

On skills, [national policy has centred on reducing economic inactivity](#), with a particular emphasis on young people. The Youth Guarantee trailblazer and the expansion of Connect to Work sit within the wider Get Britain Working plan, which expects places to develop a local response to rising NEET rates and worklessness, with a strong focus on devolved delivery.



Infrastructure and energy policy co-ordination vehicles

New actors in the infrastructure and energy landscape include the new National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, Great British Energy, and grid investment. Herefordshire continues to work with Midlands Connect on rail connectivity; connectivity (including grid and digital) is vital for productivity growth in rural areas.

Herefordshire: Place and Economy

Herefordshire is a predominately rural county, with the majority of the population living within a few urban centres – the market towns of **Kington**, **Leominster**, **Bromyard**, **Ledbury** and **Ross-on-Wye**, and the city of **Hereford**. As an economy, it looks in several directions, as part of the Marshes spanning the border into **Wales** and northwards into **Shropshire**, in close proximity to the major cities of **Cardiff** and **Bristol** to the South, with strong economic ties to **Worcestershire**, **Gloucestershire** and the **West Midlands** to the West.

Figure 3. Herefordshire's boundaries, market towns, and neighbours



Although the rural economy plays an essential role in Herefordshire's prosperity and represents a major specialism, many residents work in other sectors; **Manufacturing** makes up around a fifth of the local economy as measured through GVA, over twice the share across the UK, alongside key emerging specialisms in Industrial Strategy sectors like **Digital and Technologies**, **Creative Industries** and **Professional and Business Services**.

4 Our four delivery themes

We are committed to delivering the best for Herefordshire, positioning the county as the rural exemplar economy and securing the resource needed to deliver our ambitions. The vision of the Big Economic Plan remains the active guiding ambition of this delivery plan:

In 2050 Herefordshire is a vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit at all stages of life. Our rural communities, market towns and university city are thriving with high-quality employment, housing and services. A high-technology, higher value and creative economy has enabled living standards to rise. We have protected our rich natural environment – [The Herefordshire Big Economic Plan, 2023](#)

In delivering against this long-term vision, reflections from governance partners and stakeholders during the drafting of this document highlighted the relatively diffused nature of objectives against the six capitals framework that is set out in the Big Economic Plan. While significant progress has been made against these objectives (as set out in brief in Annex II to this document), the number of actions and themes made it challenging to identify clear owners, resources, and lines of accountability against the actions, and to understand the interdependencies between elements of the plan.

We want to simplify this approach as we take a targeted approach to delivery. This delivery plan therefore condenses down the six capitals into four delivery themes. These will form the basis for future Herefordshire council and Board progress monitoring, reporting and evaluation, to support the delivery of the overarching 2050 Herefordshire vision. The four themes are as shown below.

Figure 4. Diagrammatic overview of the four delivery themes

Overarching delivery principles: Sustainability, investment and partnership working, <u>to deliver the 2050 Herefordshire Vision</u>			
Place	People and Communities	Business Growth	Infrastructure
Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment	Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges	Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Growing and innovative businesses increasing investment, productivity and prosperity for residents	Contribution to the Herefordshire 2050 Vision: Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county

Our cross-cutting delivery principles – of ensuring sustainability, maximising investment and delivering through partnership working – will inform all that we do through the plan, ensuring that we retain a focus on the environment and collaboration as was at the heart of the BEP.

The following pages set out: updated economic statistics; strategic priorities that will be addressed through use of current and future funding resources; and the actions that will be delivered over the next three years.

Delivering in Place



House price-to-earnings ratio is high at 8.8 (vs 7.7 nationally), with housing targets recently increased by around 70% from 16,100 to 27,260 homes



A strong cultural and heritage offer supports high-value tourism, with visitor spend around £1,500 per head compared to £1,000 across the West Midlands.



Phosphate pollution in the Wye and Lugg is a binding planning constraint, with development in affected catchments required to demonstrate nutrient neutrality

This theme focuses on the whole place offer and how it can be strengthened through planning, housing, regeneration, and targeted investment. It is not intended to operate as a standalone cultural strategy or to duplicate the work of specialist cultural partners. Instead, it brings together activity across housing, public realm, culture, and neighbourhood regeneration to focus on improving how places function and feel, ensuring that growth is accompanied by high-quality environments and stronger communities.

Local evidence highlights persistent housing affordability challenges in Herefordshire, reflected in a high house price to earnings ratio and a continuing need for affordable homes. The revised national standard method for mandatory targets places greater weight on affordability, resulting in a substantial uplift in Herefordshire's housing targets relative to historic delivery rates. The formula does not reflect past delivery performance, and delivery at this scale is further constrained by nutrient neutrality requirements.

Herefordshire benefits from a high quality of place, underpinned by a strong cultural and heritage offer. Ongoing investment in the Shirehall and the redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery will further enrich this offer, strengthening the role of the city centre as a civic and cultural hub. Likewise, Pride in Place funding for the Hereford South West neighbourhood provides a focused opportunity to build on these assets, supporting neighbourhood-level improvements and extending the benefits of place-based investment more widely.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise delivering new housing in attractive, thriving, well-connected places, while protecting the natural environment

1. **Herefordshire-led delivery:** Enhancing our distinctive urban and market-town centres through planning, housing and public transport levers
2. **Collaborative delivery with partners:** Supporting culture-led attractive places and communities (both to live and to visit) with a targeted mobilisation programme
3. **National asks and influencing:** Overcoming policy and logistical barriers to unlock stalled housing within the county

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. Cement Hereford's status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre

Planned opening of the Shirehall Library and learning centre, and opening of the regenerated Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, and delivering a Cultural Strategy to support the wider growth of the Creative Industries

2. Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy

Delivering a new local plan that responds to housing targets and wider policy shifts in Herefordshire and nationally, delivering growth in Hereford and in our market towns

3. Implement the Hereford City Masterplan

Commencing implementation building on extensive community engagement to shape the long-term future of the city

4. Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes

Accelerating urban developments, ensuring sustainability and practicality through flood alleviation schemes and facilities that cater for new and existing residents

5. Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements on high street businesses

Supporting our local businesses by minimising barriers to growth and investment

6. Support the development of phosphate mitigation schemes to unlock essential housing growth

Building on phosphate, BNG and other credit schemes to enable sustainable housing and infrastructure development across the county while meeting environmental commitments

7. Implement the Pride in Place programme for Hereford South West

Effective delivery of government Pride in Place funding, into projects supported by local residents and community stakeholders

Delivering for our People and Communities

- 

The labour market is strong, with economic activity and jobs density both better than nationally. The retired population is nearly double the national share.
- 

Skills are strongest at mid-levels, with 69% qualified to A-level and low levels of no qualifications (3%), fewer are qualified to degree level or above than nationally
- 

Pay is relatively low, with people working in the county earning less than commuters living in it (£697 vs £713 per week), and both below the national average (£767)

The focus of this theme is on how skills, employment, and workforce development connect to wider economic growth and delivery priorities, and how we meet our collective ambition for a child friendly Herefordshire. While detailed, domain-specific interventions will be set out through the forthcoming Herefordshire Skills Strategy, this theme concentrates on building effective partnerships, shaping and aligning programmes, and ensuring that skills activity is integrated with housing, infrastructure, and sector growth ambitions across the BEP.

Local evidence points to a relatively tight labour market in Herefordshire, which is notable given the county's older age profile and comparatively large retired population. Employment levels remain strong, but average wages are lower than in many comparator areas, reflecting a job mix weighted towards lower-paid sectors. Looking ahead, planned housing and infrastructure growth is expected to increase demand for construction and related trades, while ongoing technological change will continue to shift skills requirements across the economy, for example digital and green skills.

At the same time, the local policy and funding context is tightening. The conclusion of UKSPF-funded programmes will reduce the range of flexible, locally tailored interventions available to respond to labour market and skills challenges. Against this backdrop, the continued growth of the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) represents a significant opportunity to strengthen local skills pathways, including new provision such as its autonomous systems course developed in partnership with the British Army. Together, these factors underline the importance of targeted coordination across skills, employment, and growth activity.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise attracting and retaining the skilled workers the county needs in future-facing jobs

1. **Herefordshire-led delivery:** Workforce development and attraction aligned with growth priorities
2. **Collaborative delivery with partners:** Developing comprehensive and well-understood skills pathways
3. **National asks and influencing:** Shaping of national and sub-regional skills programmes

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. **Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration through the Skills Board**

Strengthening our local skills capacity, and supporting businesses with workforce planning through the Growth Hub, while reviewing opportunities to align sub-regional skills funding with the county's priorities

2. **Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability**

Review specialisms and opportunities in technical skills or the development of a flagship innovation asset for the county

3. **Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships and the Youth Employment Hub, in meeting our ambition for a child friendly Herefordshire**

Supporting the Youth Employment Hub, promoting apprenticeships, and developing comprehensive skills pathways for our young people

4. **Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations**

Push to promote digital skills, linking to the observed adoption of AI by Herefordshire businesses

5. **Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working**

Work with anchor employers through business growth board to review opportunities for older workers

6. **Review usage of planning gain (S106), procurement levers and strategies to align with skills needs**

Ensuring that communities benefit from new developments, with local workforces adequately equipped to support our housing and infrastructure ambitions and construction requirements

Delivering on Business Growth



Business birth and death rates are below the national average (9.5% and 8.8% vs 10.4% and 10.3%), while the share of high-growth firms is higher (5.0% vs 4.2%)



Manufacturing is a strength and accounts for 15% of employment (vs 8% nationally). That said, overall, the county's productivity is lower than nationally



The enterprise base is being reinforced through anchor sites, including Skylon Park, the Shell Store, and the developing Enterprise Park at Ross-on-Wye

This theme focuses on the enabling conditions for growth that the county can shape – bringing forward and filling employment land, supporting firms to innovate and adopt new technologies, and building a compelling investment proposition that attracts capital and anchors growth sectors locally.

Herefordshire's business base broadly reflects national patterns, though it is slightly less dynamic overall. This is offset by a marginally higher share of high-growth firms, indicating pockets of strong performance within the local economy. Manufacturing remains a particular strength for a predominantly rural county, providing relatively high-value employment, although headline productivity levels remain below the national average.

Since publication of the BEP, there has been significant activity. New employment land is coming on stream, including the commencement of construction at the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park. To support the take-up of these sites and strengthen the county's growth proposition, the council is developing its inward investment function, with a dedicated lead in place and a new investment prospectus under development.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise stimulating the growth of more higher value jobs in growing businesses

1. **Herefordshire-led delivery:** Increased investment in growth sectors through quality employment sites
2. **Collaborative delivery with partners:** Championing adoption of new productivity-increasing technologies for businesses within Herefordshire
3. **National asks and influencing:** Building an overarching inward investment narrative, sector and innovation-led growth and economic niche for Herefordshire within the wider region

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. Attract and deliver investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park

Developing the enterprise park, creating jobs for residents, including in sectors like Agri-food and agri-tech, and unlocking greater investment in our market towns

2. Further develop our local inward investment offer and capacity and maximise value of the Enterprise Zone

Further enhance the delivery of our inward investment programme, building a regional economic narrative and case for investment for Herefordshire. We will maximise the value the Hereford EZ and Ross Enterprise Park by targeting growth in high-value sectors, while supporting additional investment levers such as the hotel and conferencing proposition

3. Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes

Capitalising on local strengths in automation and robotics within the agri-food and agri-tech sector, reviewing and securing wider funding opportunities, and working with neighbouring places and higher education institutions.

4. Secure Government investment in Defence & Security

Targeted promotion and influencing to highlight and seek further investment in the county's value in the sector, and promoting Defence and Security within key development and policy forums (e.g., UKREiiF)

5. Support Herefordshire's businesses to scale up – such as through AI activities – through the continued delivery of business growth support

Review existing AI uptake within Herefordshire's businesses and develop programmes of support based on business growth needs and opportunities

Delivering on Infrastructure



Car access is high (86% of properties vs 77% nationally), congestion remains a constraint, with the A49 among the slowest 20% of trunk roads



Full-fibre coverage is high at 81.5%, 5G remains limited at 66%, among the lowest nationally



Public transport travel times to employment are long (21.5 minutes vs 11.5 nationally), with direct but slow inter-city rail links

The focus of this theme is on the areas where Herefordshire Council and its partners can directly deliver, co-ordinate delivery, or exert influence. It covers transport connectivity, digital infrastructure, and energy and charging infrastructure that enable growth and support place-based development. Infrastructure that sits wholly outside local influence – including nationally-determined rail investment decisions or utilities investment beyond engagement and advocacy – is referenced where relevant but is not treated as a core delivery responsibility.

Local evidence highlights structural constraints for Herefordshire. Weak public transport provision and relatively slow inter-regional rail links reinforce high car dependency, contributing to congestion pressures, particularly in and around Hereford and along key corridors such as the A49. The commencement of the Hereford Bypass Phase 1 by the end of 2026 will start to address infrastructure constraints, along with developing the phase 2 business case and seeking government and developer investment as part of the Hereford Western Growth Corridor.

There have been other areas of progress since publication of the BEP; for example, investment through Fastershire has driven a marked improvement in fixed broadband coverage across much of the county, although gaps in mobile and 5G connectivity persist. The Hereford Transport Hub is under development, providing a focal point for improving public transport connectivity and integration. At a wider scale, progression of the Midlands Rail Hub has the potential, over time, to unlock additional capacity and improve service reliability on routes serving Herefordshire.

In this delivery plan we will prioritise unlocking room for economic growth over coming decades by progressing major infrastructure projects

1. **Herefordshire-led delivery:** Delivering the foundational economic infrastructure needed for future growth
2. **Collaborative delivery with partners:** Rolling out new digital connectivity and energy infrastructure to Herefordshire's places
3. **National asks and influencing:** Improving regional rail connectivity into Herefordshire from beyond the region

We will prioritise the following actions:

1. **Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases**

Beginning to implement phase one of the project, and finalising business cases to secure funding for the second phase

2. **Support delivery of enhanced rail services such as double frequency between Hereford and Worcester**

Supporting rail enhancements to better connect Herefordshire with its neighbours (within both England and Wales), and lobby to ensure prioritisation of Herefordshire components as part of the committed post-HS2 funding.

3. **Deliver EV charging facilities across the county**

Promoting private-led delivery of car park charging points, alongside a council-led rollout of on-street charging points, backed by LEVI funding

4. **Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas, prioritising business growth constraints**

Working with NGED and energy partners to ensure awareness of Herefordshire's grid requirements, and with digital partners to promote 5G and connectivity infrastructure in rural areas, with the potential to act as business hubs

5. **Deliver Bus Services Improvement Plan Funding and review public transport access to local employment and skills opportunities**

Enhancing connectivity to our major education, skills and employment centres, and throughout our rural places and market towns

6. **Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub**

Finalising construction of the Hereford Transport Hub, improving public transport connectivity to enable future growth, and aligning activities with Bus Service Improvement Plan resources

5 Next steps and delivery principles

With the publication of this plan, we will move immediately to delivery. Project leads have been identified across the council and each is building project plans to ensure that work progresses at pace. Progress will be overseen by Elected Members and the relevant Boards and KPIs will be developed related to projects. We will commit to annual progress updates that set out progress against projects as well as an update on the economic data (mindful that this has a time lag).

We will deliver through the three delivery principles of this document: partnership working, maximising investment, and ensuring long-term sustainability. These cross-cutting delivery principles are outlined in brief below.

1) Ensuring long-term sustainability in all that we do through delivery of the Plan

Sustainability is a key component of the overarching vision for the Big Economic Plan's Vision and is an essential delivery principle for all four of our themes. Through this plan, Herefordshire Council will commit to embedding sustainable growth as much as possible within all of our delivery priorities and actions. The Economy and Place Board will specifically monitor how sustainability is being achieved across the four delivery themes as part of quarterly reporting to ensure the cross cutting theme is fully embedded. The Board will ensure alignment to and support the implementation of the Environmental Improvement Plans.

Sustainable growth is also a potential strong route for growth and skilled work, rewarding work for Herefordshire; through the growth of the green economy, through housing retrofit, through renewable energy, and through grid decarbonisation and decentralisation. We will capitalise on these opportunities to generate good jobs for Herefordshire residents and explore the potential use of our levers and funding to grow nascent innovative economic clusters and specialisms within and beyond Herefordshire's borders.

2) Partnership working: the role of collaborative governance boards in delivery

Herefordshire Council, which has led the development of this plan, is part of the wider place strategic leadership, and the input and support of key partners from the private, public and third sectors will be essential to delivering the outcomes highlighted.

Collaborative place governance boards have been consulted in the development of this plan, and they will play an essential role in its delivery, as outlined below:

- The **Economy and Place Board** will play a key role in holding partners to account and overseeing the delivery and implementation of the Plan.
- The **Skills Board** will be a key partner in delivering the People and Communities theme, and partners on the board will play a significant role in delivery.
- The **Business Growth Board** will be a key partner in delivering the Business Growth theme.

We will also work with other strategic boards who have a role in delivery at a project and theme level, including the **Herefordshire Environment Board**, who will input and shape

priorities across the Delivery Plan, working through and alongside the Economy and Place Board

DRAFT

3) Maximising investment through the Big Economic Delivery Plan

Funding and finance will be an essential component of delivery against the objectives in each theme. To date UK Shared Prosperity Fund has supported much of Herefordshire's initial delivery, but government has announced that this will end in 2026.

Based on the review of funding opportunities (included in Annex I), there are levers with flexibility, which will be available over the lifetime of this Big Economic Delivery Plan:

- **Local resources:** Locally controlled and influenced resources will be directed to support delivery. These will include Connect to Work, the Local Skills Improvement Plan process, and other levers available to local actors.
- **National partnerships:** In the medium-term, national partnerships with agencies and UK investment institutions could provide an opportunity to leverage in additional resource.
- **Devolution:** The majority of new funding available through national Government is directed through MSAs and Local Growth Plans. Therefore, in the longer term, future funding opportunities are likely to be dependent on progression of collaboration mechanisms through the devolution process.

Over the lifetime of this plan, it should be expected that additional levers will become available. Using the priorities of this delivery plan to align new resources as they are made available will ensure long-term delivery towards the policy objectives and outcomes highlighted in the Big Economic Plan.

Annex I: Funding opportunities review

This short review summarises some key funding opportunities for delivery of the Big Economic Plan, and highlights some of the potential relevance for our four delivery themes.

	National Housing Bank: <i>Place, Infrastructure</i>
Description	Launched in 2025 as a publicly owned subsidiary of Homes England, the bank is intended to provide long-term, flexible finance to accelerate housing delivery by unlocking private investment and addressing viability and infrastructure constraints on complex sites.
Implication	The Bank represents a high-impact funding opportunity with strong alignment to the BEP. In Herefordshire, the clearest potential fit is in supporting the delivery of the Western Growth Corridor, where housing growth is closely linked to the delivery of the Southern Relief Road and associated infrastructure.
	Institutional investors: <i>Business Growth, Infrastructure, Place</i>
Description	The UK institutional investment landscape has shifted significantly in recent years. At present, the domestic market for 'core+' investment, offering inflation + 3-4% returns, is limited. Instead, appetite tends to shift between low-risk, inflation-matching assets and higher-return, value-add or opportunistic strategies.
Implication	For local government, this means that partnership opportunities increasingly lie with Local Government Pension Scheme funds, specialist impact or infrastructure funds, and international investors rather than traditional UK pensions. Partnerships also bring private-sector expertise, capabilities, and opportunities to share risk, while enabling councils to leverage their land, planning powers, and convening role to attract investment, although this may be a longer-term commitment.
	Devolved funding resources: <i>Business Growth, Infrastructure, People and Communities, Place</i>
Description	Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) can draw on a wide set of funding routes, combining locally controlled fundraising. Government is expanding these mayoral-only funding routes with the Budget announcing a new £500m Mayoral Revolving Growth Fund for MSAs in the North and Midlands with an integrated settlement.
Implication	Devolved funding routes represent a high-impact and strongly aligned pathway for delivering the BEP, offering growing local discretion to combine fiscal levers, investment powers, and multi-year settlements. While this creates significant long-term opportunity, Herefordshire is at an early stage in its devolution journey.
	Modern Industrial Strategy: <i>Business Growth</i>

Descr	The Government has announced a set of funding routes to support delivery of the Modern Industrial Strategy and its priority sector growth objectives.
Implication	In practice, much of this funding will be routed through MSAs. However, where Herefordshire businesses are able to engage, the scale and potential impact of the support is significant. In advanced manufacturing, for example, the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan makes up to £4.3 billion available nationally, presenting material opportunities for local manufacturers to access investment, innovation, and productivity-enhancing support through competitive routes and partnerships.
	Programmatic funds: <i>Business Growth, People and Communities</i>
Description	A further set of funding routes comes through nationally designed, programme-specific allocations advanced to local authorities and partners, including Growth Hub funding, Connect to Work, and Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) funding. These streams vary in focus but each operates as a distinct funding track with defined objectives, eligibility, and delivery requirements.
Implication	Collectively, they are important components of the local funding mix and can support meaningful activity in their own right; however, their overall impact is typically constrained by relatively modest sums, and alignment with the BEP can be limited by relatively low local discretion.
	Pride in Place Fund: <i>Place, People and Communities</i>
Descript	Pride in Place is a Government funding programme designed to support locally led regeneration in specific neighbourhoods, with a focus on improving the quality of place, strengthening community assets, and enhancing local pride.
Implication	Similar to the programmatic funding above, there is relatively limited potential for alignment with the BEP's priorities. However, for 'Hereford South West', Pride in Place will unlock a substantial quantum of funding for a small geography, where BEP actions linked to the Place theme can augment funding delivery.

Annex II: Progress Update on the Big Economic Plan

Progress update

The BEP set out priorities through a ‘six capitals’ framework. The Council has reviewed relevant 2024-25 Council and partner activity since the BEP was adopted, as set out below. Across the BEP, the majority of target outcomes have seen some degree of delivery progress to date, including activity arising from actions and opportunities that were not anticipated at the time the BEP was drafted. There have been positive actions within all of the six capitals; progress has been stronger notably in the People themes (with the delivery of the UKSPF programmes), in Enterprise (with the delivery of key employment land expansion and investment projects) and in Investment (with the appointment of dedicated investment management capacity).

People

- Establishment of Skills Board and associated activity
- Delivery of UKSPF skills and wider programmes (Get Britain Working / Connect to Work)
- Establishment of Youth Employment Hub and apprenticeship awards
- Ongoing regeneration of the Shirehall Community Hub

Community and partnerships

- Establishment of Economy and Place Board and the Charities as Business Forum
- UKSPF funding committed to local capacity building
- LVEP, cultural partnership
- Stronger Towns outcomes

Environment and climate change

- Delivery of wetland schemes at Luston, Tarrington and Dilwyn
- Delivery of the new Low Carbon Technology Centre

Enterprise

- Establishment of the Business Growth Board
- Hereford Enterprise Zone expansion, Ross Enterprise Park expansion, and military sector growth
- Cultural regeneration programmes: Hereford Museum and Art Gallery Leominster HAZ
- Economic Development Programme progressing from EZ funds
- UKSPF delivery of R&D and innovation schemes
- Development of the Defence Prospectus and Defence/Cyber Sector Forum

Infrastructure

- Delivery of the Hereford Transport Hub (LUF funding)
- Progression of the case for the Western Bypass

Investment

- Appointment of an Inward Investment Manager and development of a new prospectus
- Continued business investment in the Hereford Enterprise Zone
- Recent Pride in Place funding for South West Hereford

Herefordshire BEP Delivery Plan: Actions Annex

119



About this annex to the Big Economic Delivery Plan

The [Herefordshire Big Economic Plan](#) (BEP) was launched in 2023 and sets out a vision for Herefordshire as an exemplar 21st century rural economy.

This document is an annex to the Herefordshire Big Economic Delivery Plan, which sets out a set of economic delivery priorities and refreshed priorities for the medium-term. It is a companion document, setting out actions for the next 3 years under four refocused themes.

This annex sets out detailed funding and timing considerations, with the policy detail developed in close collaboration with key delivery partners, in particular the Skills Board and the Business Growth Board.

Figure: BEP 2025 Overview

What this document is	What this document isn't
• A medium-term delivery plan for the Big Economic Plan – focused on the next 3 years • Smaller number of priorities and actions – that Herefordshire can own, partner and influence • Milestones and KPIs to monitor progress with measurable targets • Mindful of available resource (e.g., with UKSPF ending in 2026), and existing levers available at the local level	• A full reworking of the Big Economic Plan • A comprehensive new evidence base • A detailed delivery plan for the activities of the Skills Board (although it will set broad priorities)

Our three-year delivery plan

The flagship actions that will shape our county over the next three years

We will develop our physical and digital infrastructure, making Herefordshire a better place to live, to work, and to start and grow a business. **Central to this will be progressing the Hereford Western Growth Corridor.** In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase of the bypass, linking the A49 and A465 south of Hereford. We will develop a Western Growth Corridor Masterplan, setting out our longer-term proposition to further enhance Hereford’s road network, while unlocking crucial housing and employment growth in the city.

We will enrich our rural and urban places, with sustainable growth that meets housing demand, while protecting our rich natural environment. **Central to this will be refining and promoting our cultural offerings.** In three years, we will have delivered our redeveloped Hereford Museum & Art Gallery, cementing our status as a place where people want to visit.

We will prioritise our people and communities, developing pathways for our young people in meeting our ambition for a child friendly Herefordshire and meeting the needs of workers of all ages. **Central to this will be developing our Skills Strategy, shaped by partners in the Skills Board.**

We will support all businesses with the tools they need to grow, and we will make Herefordshire an attractive place for investment. **Central to this will be delivering the Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park.** In three years, we will have completed construction of the first phase, filling plots with businesses in our key growth sectors, and creating jobs for local people. We will continue to develop our overarching inward investment offer, drawing on our unique strengths in cyber, defence and security.

The Plan on a Page

Delivering the 2050 Herefordshire Vision:
A vibrant, healthy, zero-carbon, and inclusive place to live, work, study
and visit at all stages of life

Owned and overseen by the Herefordshire Economy and Place Board

Place: Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand while protecting our natural environment

Flagship action: Cement Hereford's status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre, accelerating delivery of the Hereford Museum and Shirehall and developing a Cultural Strategy to boost local Creative Industries

- Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy
- Implement the Hereford City Masterplan
- Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes
- Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements
- Support developers to bring forward private phosphate mitigation schemes
- Implement the Pride in Place Programme for Hereford South West

People and Communities: A growing, skilled and flourishing population working effectively together to solve challenges

Delivery partner:
Skills Board

Flagship action: Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration with our local partners, including colleges, NMITE and training providers, with delivery through the Skills Board

- Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability
- Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships
- Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations
- Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working
- Review usage of planning gain (S106) and procurement levers to align with skills needs

Business Growth: Growing and innovative businesses increasing investment, productivity and prosperity for residents

Delivery partner:
Business Growth Board

Flagship action: Deliver and attract investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park, concluding construction and developing a Placement Strategy to attract firms in high-value, high-growth sectors like agri-technology

- Develop our local inward investment offer and maximise the value of the Enterprise Zone
- Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes
- Secure Government Investment in Defence & Security
- Support Herefordshire's businesses to scale up, including through AI activities

Infrastructure: Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county

Flagship action: Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases, unlocking of substantial additional housing growth through the Local Plan

- Support delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub, doubling Hereford to Worcester frequency
- Deliver Electric Vehicle charging facilities across the county
- Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas
- Deliver BSIP Funding and review public transport access to employment opportunities
- Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub

Underpinned by our delivery principles: Sustainability, investment and partnership working

Place

**Thriving places, with growth to meet housing demand
while protecting our natural environment**

Cement Hereford’s status as a cultural and visitor attraction centre

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Cement Hereford’s status as a centre for cultural and visitor attraction Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - VCSE and cultural partners - Herefordshire Culture partnership	- Herefordshire Council - Stronger Towns Fund - National Heritage Lottery Fund - Arts Council - Clore Duffield Foundation	Accelerate on-site regeneration work of Hereford Museum & Art Gallery, and of Shirehall Library	- Support delivery of a Cultural Strategy - Have opened Hereford Museum and Shirehall	- Improved attraction as a visitor destination - Increased tourism numbers - Increased growth in the Creative Industries sector

Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy, delivering growth in Hereford and in our market towns

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Finalise the Local Plan and Infrastructure Strategy, delivering growth in Hereford and in our market towns Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	Herefordshire Council Statutory responsibilities	- Finalise our call for sites - Open the plan's gateway 1 consultation	- Take the draft Local Plan to Gateway 2 consultation in September 2027 - Examination and adoption of the plan in 2028	- A county-wide strategy that responds to government changes and Herefordshire's priorities - Supports accelerated delivery of key infrastructure projects

Implement the Hereford City Masterplan

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Implement the Hereford City Masterplan Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	- Local resources - Private investment in site development	- Finalise, launch and promote the Hereford City Masterplan - In parallel, begun engagement with market town stakeholders on their place-making priorities ahead of significant housing growth	After three years we will have made a visible difference in the town centre.	- Improved public realm - Increased private investment

Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Bring forward Merton Meadow and Essex Arms development schemes Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	£2m central Government grant to support flood prevention	- Complete the flood alleviation works - Develop area masterplan - Procure a development partner	Have delivered the first phase of housing and developed a multi-story carpark	400 new inner-city homes (Merton Meadows) - New multi story carpark - Creation of city centre wetlands and park area, yielding biodiversity benefits

Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements on high street businesses

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Review process for street pavement licensing and regulatory requirements on high street businesses Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council <i>Partner:</i> Hereford Business Improvement District	Local resources and planning tools	After one year, we will have a clear view on barriers and opportunities, with a developed internal business case for change	- After three years, if the review is supportive, we will have carried out a pilot scheme and have reviewed impacts - We will continue to review other regulatory burdens on high street businesses.	- Attracting new developments - Creation of lively centres across Herefordshire, supporting Hereford and the market towns to thrive as they grow

Support developers to bring forward private phosphate mitigation schemes and wetlands while continuing to progress council-led schemes

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Support the development of phosphate mitigation schemes to unlock essential housing growth Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Private Developers - Herefordshire Council	- Local resources - Seek national resources for additional council-led interventions	- Review potential for BNG trading scheme on model of current successful phosphate trading scheme - Have worked to influence national policymaking and agency actions on wider regulatory rules - Take forward Council-led nutrient neutrality phosphate projects	- Support joint delivery of phosphate mitigation initiatives - Leverage opportunities for national funding resources for council-led and grant-backed schemes	- New housing units - Ensuring Herefordshire’s land is sustainable for future generations - Lifting the phosphate restrictions

Implement the Pride in Place Programme for Hereford South West

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Implement the Pride in Place Programme for Hereford South West Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council on behalf of Hereford South West neighbourhood - Consultation with VCSE and local stakeholders	National Government resources – £20m over 10 years	- Establish a neighbourhood board representing Hereford South West - Submit a Pride in Place Plan to MHCLG for assessment - Receive our first delivery funding payment, and begin to implement community improvements	Continue to deliver Pride in Place funding over the next 10 years	- Better opportunities for residents - Reduced spatial deprivation and inequalities - Community-led change in our most deprived neighbourhood

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood, showing a mix of residential houses with varying rooflines and colors, interspersed with lush green trees and lawns. The overall scene is peaceful and well-maintained.

People and Communities

A growing, skilled and flourishing
population working effectively together
to solve challenges

Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration through the Skills Board

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Develop and implement an Employment and Skills Strategy, and deepen local collaboration through the Skills Board Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - Facilitation and oversight from Skills Board - Local education and employment partners; e.g. NMITE, colleges and training providers	- Herefordshire Council - Marches LSIP, Get Britain Working, Connect to Work - Prospective devolved resources such as ASF	- Clear priorities agreed through skills strategy by Autumn 2026, and begin to implement from the following autumn - Have developed and began to implement our post-16 skills strategy	- Have made significant progress implementing measures set out in the skills strategy - Have strengthened our relationships with partners, including deeper engagement with NMITE, colleges and training providers - Continue to provide skills and workforce planning support to businesses through the Growth Hub	- A skilled workforce, flexible to local needs - Businesses can undertake workforce-planning more effectively - Integrated funding and plans that work together to support the needs of the county

Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Establish Herefordshire as a Centre for Excellence in a local economic capability Relevant BEP priorities: 	Skills Board	- Potential devolved resources - Potential national funding resources and Industrial Strategy opportunities (e.g., Technical Excellence Colleges)	- Support ongoing bid from Herefordshire and Ludlow Colleges for a Clean Energy Technical Centre of Excellence - Review opportunities and specialisms for opportunities on technical skills - Explore funding opportunities, and if appropriate develop bids	Have progressed a proposition to full outline business stage and capitalised on any available funding opportunities.	A new innovation or skills assets for Herefordshire

Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships and the Youth Employment Hub

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Modernise pathways to work for young people through apprenticeships and the Youth Employment Hub Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council – Skills Board - Employment and Apprenticeship partners - Education partners - Youth Employment Hub	- Local resources, overseen by the Skills Board - Partner resources, including the continued expansion of NMITE, and inward investment that creates local job opportunities. - Prospective devolved resources	- Continue to provide the apprenticeship award - Work to secure long-term funding to ensure the continuation of the Youth Employment Hub	- Secure long-term funding for the Youth Employment Hub, ensuring we can continue to help vulnerable young people into work - Increase the number of apprenticeships offered in the county, working with neighbours (i.e. Worcestershire), and with local firms	- Greater retention of our young people - Greater attraction of young people into our county - Lower numbers of NEETs - Secure support systems in place from education into local workplaces

Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Prioritise AI and digital upskilling for all generations Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council – Skills Board - Employment and Apprenticeship partners - Education partners - Youth Employment Hub	- Local resources, overseen by the Skills Board - Prospective devolved resources - Potential government grants by leveraging skills needs in nationally important IS-8 sectors.	- Digital skills mapping and promotion campaign - AI skills to be embedded in the LSIP, provision defined and shaped by local employers - Clear offer for businesses on where to go for digital and AI upskilling	- Review potential to offer short Training courses as well as provision at L2-7 - Digital & AI skills improvement plan & partnership, overseen by the Skills Board	- Increased digital proficiency amongst all residents - Improvements in productivity through AI usage - Future workforces are better matched with business needs

Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Support older workers to remain in the workforce through partner working Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council – Skills Board - Employment partners - Health partners	- Local resources, overseen by the Skills Board - Prospective devolved resources - NHS / ICB	- Provide information and guidance to support older people looking for work - Anchor coalition convened to review job roles that can form part of an older worker opportunity package	- Work with the ICB to build a healthy workplace programme - Reviewed potential for an anchor employers employer network, piloting older worker project - Integrated workplace wellbeing offer	- Increased employee satisfaction - Lower old-age unemployment

Review usage of planning gain (S106), procurement levers and strategies to align with skills needs

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Review usage of planning gain (S106), procurement levers and strategies to align with skills needs Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	- Local resources and levers, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy - Social value commitments from public sector - VCSE and partner bodies	Review current use of planning gain, S106, and CIL	Explore pooling of social value commitments from public sector contracts in partnership with workers	- Local residents can benefit from good jobs - A workforce to support emerging housing and infrastructure development



Business Growth

Growing and innovative businesses
increasing investment, productivity
and prosperity for residents

Attract and deliver investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Deliver and attract investment into Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	Phase 1: £7.25 million allocated capital funding from Herefordshire Council	- Commence construction of Phase 1 of the enterprise park - Hold events to increase awareness and interest in opportunities of the Enterprise Park - Begin to develop a Placement Strategy to define the types of businesses we will look to attract, which could include a specific sectoral focus	- Complete construction of the enterprise park, with newly developed plots home to high-value businesses in our target sectors - Phase 2: To be commenced within this time period.	- Greater productivity - Employment and business opportunities outside of Hereford - Sustainable growth and investment in our market towns

Develop our local inward investment offer and capacity and maximise value of Enterprise Zone

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Further develop our local inward investment offer and capacity and maximise value of the Enterprise Zone Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	Local resources	- Launch a dedicated inward investment website - Continue to promote opportunities on Hereford Enterprise Zone - Have developed a complementary sectoral oriented prospectus - Review the finalised hotel demand study - Identify calendar of upcoming trade events	- Have developed a coordinated, targeted investment offer to promote our key opportunities - Engage with hotel and conferencing space providers, aiming to encourage new developments in our county - Complete sale of development-ready plots on Hereford Enterprise Zone to encourage high-value opportunities. - Have delivered the Marches LSIP to improve supply of skills in key sectors	- Greater investment into the county - Increasing economic growth and productivity - Creating multiplier effects and spreading prosperity throughout the economy - Fostering high-value job creation

Support the growth of Agri-Tech businesses through innovation adoption programmes

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Capitalising on local strengths in automation and robotics within the agri-food and agri-tech sector through innovation adoption programmes, working with neighboring places and higher education institutions Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - Business Growth Board	- Local resources - Opportunity to leverage in national funding sources (eg UKRI, Innovate UK)	- Have reviewed alternate funding routes outside of the LIPF process to progress proposals for innovation delivery - Continue to deliver existing R&D programmes - Review scope to progress partnerships with regional higher education institutions and innovation assets	<i>Subject to funding</i>, we be delivering key innovation activities for Herefordshire agri-tech firms	- Increased agri-tech business spend and investment - Deeper engagement with academic institutions - Increased productivity for Herefordshire firms

Secure Government Investment in Defence & Security

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Secure Government Investment in Defence & Security Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - National Government - NMITE - Local defence sector businesses - Regional partners; cyber triangle with Gloucestershire and Worcestershire	- Local resources - National lobbying	- Finalise the Defence and Security Prospectus - Promote Defence and Security within key development and policy forums, including attending SSDC trade events and other relevant events - Review use of Herefordshire Council assets to promote business growth opportunities, including testbeds for new technologies (eg autonomous vehicle) - NMITE to launch drone engineering qualification	- Demonstrate and communicate clearly Herefordshire's position and capability in the sector - Secure significant Government investment in the sector - Have secured national recognition of our capabilities in this sector, including potentially a Defence Deal with Government	- IS-8 funding to support the defence and security sector - Employment opportunities for residents - Future-proofing Herefordshire's economy

Support Herefordshire’s businesses to scale up – such as through AI activities – through the continued delivery of business growth support

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Support Herefordshire’s businesses to scale up – such as through AI activities – through the continued delivery of business growth support Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - Growth Hub - Business Growth Board - Growth Hub	Herefordshire Council Business Support Resources	- Review existing AI uptake within Herefordshire businesses - Continue to deliver business growth support - Review specific opportunities for accelerated sectoral implementation, such as the use of AI and robotics in agri-food/agri-tech - Test and develop a scalable model for scale-up angel investment with neighbouring areas	- Have developed specific programme of support based on review of needs and opportunities - Increased profile of Herefordshire businesses - Supported Herefordshire businesses to bid for UKRI grants	- Local businesses in our rural and urban areas can grow sustainably - Workforce planning is informed by future skills needs - Increased percentage of Herefordshire businesses using AI

An aerial photograph of a city, likely in the UK, featuring a river, a bridge, and various buildings. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text 'Infrastructure' is prominently displayed in the upper center, and a descriptive sentence is below it. The page number '144' is on the left side.

Infrastructure

Reliable and resilient infrastructure supporting economic growth and investment across our county

Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Progress delivery of the Western Growth Corridor; commencing work on Bypass Phase 1, and securing funding for subsequent phases Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	- National Government resources – DfT’s RIS4 (from 2031) - Local resources - Prospective devolved resources	- Have included the Western Growth Corridor as part of the draft local plan to unlock more housing growth - Begin construction of Phase 1 of the Western Bypass - Make the business case for Bypass Phase 2	- Complete construction of Phase 1 of the Western Bypass - Develop a masterplan for the Western Growth Corridor - Secure funding for subsequent phases	- Reduced congestion - Improved travel times - Unlocking housing growth (in line with 27,260 home target over the next 20-years)

Support delivery of the Midlands Rail Hub to double frequency between Hereford and Worcester, and continue to lobby for local rail improvements

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Support delivery of enhanced rail services such as double frequency between Hereford and Worcester Relevant BEP priorities: 	- National government - Key partner – Midlands Connect	- National Government resources - Prospective devolved resources	- Establish a Rail Strategy - Seek a commitment from national Government to a rail programme	- Ensure prioritisation of Herefordshire components within delivery and sequencing - Increase visibility of investment into inward investment offer	- Better opportunities for residents - Reduced congestion - Improved travel times - Increased labour market integration with Worcester

Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Complete construction of the Hereford Transport Hub Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	- Levelling Up Fund and Active Travel Funds - Local resources (£3.5m)	Completed construction of the Transport Hub (targeting Nov. 2026)	- Have integrated the investment with BSIP funding delivery on services - Monitor impact on new Transport Hub on local bus services and key outcomes	- Reduced congestion (within Hereford) - Improved public transport times and availability (reduced travel time) - Improved gateway to county

Deliver EV charging facilities across the county

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Deliver EV charging facilities across the county Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council - Private investors	- National funding route – LEVI funding - Private funding	- Private-led delivery of charging points in car parks across the county - Council-led rollout of on-street charging points (LEVI)	Review progress and develop more ambitious bid for following Spending Review Period	- Increased number of EV charging points delivered - Improved air quality

Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas, prioritising business growth constraints

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Mobilise partners to improve energy access and digital connectivity in rural areas, prioritising business growth constraints Relevant BEP priorities: 	- Herefordshire Council – strategic pressure and lobbying - Herefordshire Council Planning Department <i>To work with:</i> - RESP owner - National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)	- National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) resources - Partner resources – renewable energy owners	- Continue Partner-based delivery of 5G and broadband infrastructure - Develop evidence base to improve strategic pressure by providing evidence of unmet energy demand and connectivity cold-spots	Accelerate delivery of new energy and digital connectivity components to rural areas, including 5G masts	- Improved connectivity - Increased inward investment - Rural areas can grow into hubs for modern business activity

Deliver BSIP Funding and review public transport access to local employment and skills opportunities

Action	Owner	Funding route	After one year, we will	After three years, we will	Associated outputs and outcomes
Deliver BSIP Funding and review support for public transport access to local employment and skills opportunities Relevant BEP priorities: 	Herefordshire Council	- National Government resources - Local resources	- Deliver BSIP funding through 2026 - Review accessibility between our market towns - Review public transport access to key employment growth sites; Ross, Skylon EZ, Cyber Quarter	- Prepare for delivery of BSIP+ and successive funding bids to improve bus connectivity (potentially including devolved funding opportunities) - Ensure the continuation of the Hereford city bike share scheme and wider encouragement of alternative travel options	- Reduced congestion - Improved travel times - Increased frequency, accessibility and availability of bus services - Increased inward investment

At Metro Dynamics, we **care** about places, our clients, and our colleagues.

We are an **independent** organisation, **curious** about our work, and **collaborative** in our approach. We strive to **make a difference** in all that we do.



3 Waterhouse Square
138 Holborn
London
EC1N 2SW

020 3865 3082

1 St Peter's Square
Manchester
M2 3DE

0161 8833736



Title of report: Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 30 July 2026
Cabinet member:	Councillor Stoddaart, finance and corporate services
Report by:	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Report author:	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To receive the report on the outcome of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review, held on 28 May 2026, and to endorse the continued delivery of the council's action plan in response to the original recommendations.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet receives and notes the report arising from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review held on 28 May 2026; and**
- b) **Cabinet endorses the continued delivery of the council's action plan in response to the original recommendations.**

Alternative options

1. The council could choose not to accept the feedback from the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review. This option has been rejected on the basis that the feedback was shared informally at the end of visit and accepted.
2. The council could choose not to continue with the delivery of the original action plan in response to the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge. However, whilst not mandatory, the council is committed to building on the progress made to date and to deliver against the recommendations in full.

Key considerations

3. Corporate peer challenge forms part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government and is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information. The team spent four days at Herefordshire Council in June 2025, gathering information and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to reviewing a range of information. In total, the team spoke to around 120 people, including a range of council employees, elected members and external stakeholders.
4. All corporate peer challenges consider five core components:
 - a. Local authorities and outcomes
 - b. Organisational and place leadership
 - c. Governance and culture
 - d. Financial planning and management
 - e. Capacity for improvement

In addition, the peer team considered the council's approach to risk, use of data and insight and transformation.

5. The LGA report issued following the peer team's visit in June 2025 recognised Herefordshire Council as: *"a good council that is striving hard to improve further"*, highlighting a strong sense of place, maturing political culture and growing confidence in leadership. The team acknowledged the council's commitment to transformation, improvements in children's services and an increasingly strategic role in regional partnerships.
6. The report identified five key recommendations and a plan identifying 24 actions to respond to the recommendations was approved by Cabinet in September 2025.

Recommendation 1- Transformation: Now need to focus on corporate transformation and provide the resources needed to deliver.

Recommendation 2 - Data and Insights: Use of data must be improved so that insights can flow to support service improvement and framing the scope of the transformation programme. There are lots of examples where this is taking place elsewhere and the council should draw on the experience of others to support this development.

Recommendation 3 - Medium Term Financial Planning: Carry out planned refresh of Medium-Term Financial Strategy and provide some scenario planning for future years.

Recommendation 4 - Internal Capacity: Strengthen and stabilise the internal capacity to overcome challenges in the thin-client model of delivery.

Recommendation 5 - Working with partners to deliver: Partners are very supportive, and the council can build on this to develop strategic engagement with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services.

7. The council has continued to monitor delivery of planned actions to respond to these recommendations and an assessment of progress is included at Appendix 2.
8. The Progress Review is an integral part of the corporate peer challenge process. Taking place around 10-12 months against the original peer challenge, it is designed to enable the council to reflect on progress made against the recommendation and to consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges.
9. Herefordshire's Progress Review focussed on the key recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge and took place on Thursday 28 May 2026, involving the following members from the original peer team: Richard Flinton (Chief Executive, North Yorkshire Council), Cllr David Fothergill (Conservative Member, Somerset Council) replaced Philip Broadhead who stood down as a councillor in 2025 and Eamon Lally (Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association).
10. The Progress Review report is included at Appendix 1. This report acknowledges the further progress made by the council, with 100% of planned actions completed or on schedule for completion, and notes that the original observations of the peer team that "*Herefordshire is a good council that is striving hard to improve further*" were reinforced in the progress review.
11. The report recognises the key strategic achievements of the council since June 2025; in particular, the "enormous amount of work by the council over a number of years" to improve children's services resulting in an Ofsted rating of overall 'good' in January 2026, progress in delivery of major capital projects, continued robust financial stewardship, strong delivery of Delivery Plan milestones and effective partnership and cross-sector working.
12. In relation to the five specific recommendations from the original report, the peer team noted:
 - I. The **transformation** programme is gaining momentum and the council has delivered a number of projects which support its transformation aims. They noted that the governance around transformation had strengthened and there was greater clarity on the themes of the transformation: the customer; the way the organisation works; and transforming the basics. In working through the detail and bringing the projects under the three themes, the council will need deft management of its resources to deliver them, but they heard strong testimony on how the council will do that.
 - II. In June 2025, the peer team recommended that the council should improve the use of **data** so that insights can flow to support improvement and transformation. In May 2026, the team noted that the performance function has been restructured and there have been improvements in some performance management systems, including the procurement of a new performance management system to consolidate strategic, operational and service level performance in one place and support more regular and timely analysis. The team concluded that the council has the right ambition in this area but there is still more work to be done.
 - III. In terms of **financial management**, the team stated that "*the council's finances continue to be well managed....The council continues to deliver balanced outturn positions.*" The team recognised the significant impact of the fair funding review on the council and the ongoing financial challenges that created. The team acknowledged an understanding of the strategic financial position across the council, as a result of regular briefings and increased engagement between staff and the finance team;

demonstrating a collective commitment and responsibility for the council's financial position.

- IV. In the June 2025 peer challenge, the peer team noted that the council would need to raise its **internal capacity** to manage contracts and recognised that in redesigning the model for delivery of public realm services, the council had taken the opportunity to increase control and ensure improved outcomes for residents. The team noted that, given the council's ambition, it should continue to keep under review its capacity and capability to manage emerging issues.
 - V. Working with **partners** was recognised in the original corporate peer challenge as a real strength of the council and the team noted that this had continued to develop and embed over the last 12 months. The Chief Executives' Group was being replicated at director and head of service level providing the structure for, and deepening, cross organisational working, in line with the original peer team recommendation. In particular, the team noted that *"Herefordshire council is playing a leading role in the devolution discussions."*
13. During the Progress Review, the outcome of the Care Quality Commission's assessment of the council's adult social care services was received. Whilst the overall rating was 'Requires Improvement' the team noted good messages and strengths throughout the report and in relation to the corporate health of the council: *"There were clear governance, management and accountability arrangements at all levels within the local authority."* The team recognised that responding to the assessment will be a significant priority for the council, requiring much member and managerial time, but the team was encouraged by the response to the assessment being ready for the challenge.

Community impact

14. There is no direct community impact as a result of the corporate peer challenge progress review report. However, the ongoing action to embed more strategic engagement with the voluntary and community sector will have a positive long-term impact in terms of genuine co-production and involvement in strategic commissioning.

Environmental Impact

15. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
16. The decision to receive the corporate peer challenge progress review report will have no environmental impacts.

Equality duty

17. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
18. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision, and it has been found to have no impact for equality.

Resource implications

19. There are no resource implications arising from the decision to receive the corporate peer challenge progress review report. Any resource implications associated with individual activities within the ongoing action plan will be subject to the normal governance processes.

Legal implications

20. There are no direct legal implications arising from this recommendation.

Risk management

21. The risk of not continuing the progress the original recommendations made by the peer challenge team is that opportunities for improvement are not taken which may have an adverse effect on the council's longer term strategic plans.

Consultees

22. Consultation has been undertaken with, Political Group Leaders, the Corporate Leadership Team and the wider Leadership Group.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review: Herefordshire Council, 28 May 2026
Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Statement May 2026

Background papers

None identified.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Herefordshire Council

28 May 2026

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge

Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. Summary of the approach..... 3

3. Progress Review - Feedback..... 4

4. Final thoughts and next steps 11

1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during 23-26 June 2025 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank Herefordshire Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Herefordshire Council took place (onsite) on 28th May 2026.

The Progress Review focussed on the key recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge. These are set out in section 3 along with the peer teams feedback on the council's progress over the last year.

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Richard Flinton Chief Executive North Yorkshire Council
- Cllr David Fothergill Conservative member, Somerset Council (replaced Philip Broadhead who stood down as a councillor in 2025)
- Eamon Lally, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

3

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Eamonn O'Brien

Chief Executive (Interim): Jenny Rowlands

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

3. Progress Review - Feedback

The CPC made 5 key recommendations and a number of supplementary recommendations. The council, in addressing these recommendations, undertook or is undertaking 24 actions. In the council's progress review statement, the RAG rated action plan reports that 100 per cent of actions have been completed or are on schedule for completion.

The peer team welcome the opportunity to return to Herefordshire Council to see what progress the council has made over the past year in meeting the recommendations from the original CPC Report. At the CPC held in June 2025 the peer team recognised that Herefordshire is a good council that is striving hard to improve further. Our observation, that it benefits from a strong sense of place, a maturing political culture and a growing confidence in its leadership, was reinforced during the return visit on 28 May 2026.

The council has made further progress in the last year. Significantly the council received an Ofsted rating of overall 'good' for its children's services, which represents an enormous amount of work by the council over a number of years. The new transport hub in Hereford is nearly complete. Progress has been made on the initial phase of the Hereford bypass, with contractors appointed to carry out extensive design and technical development work. The eventual aim of the bypass is to relieve congestion in the city and to open up land for 14,000 new homes and 150 hectares of employment land. The council's cabinet is due to decide, on 10 September 2026, on the award of the construction contract for phase one of the bypass.

3.1 Key Recommendation 1: Now need to focus on corporate transformation and provide the resources needed to deliver.

In addition, the following was recommended:

- Provide a clear transformation delivery plan. More work is needed to communicate the balance between future investment in, and savings from transformation and how this is tied in with the MTFS. A clearly articulated delivery plan is needed which sets out the investment required and the profile of savings from that investment

The council has delivered a number of projects which support its transformation aims. For example, it has implemented a new content management system and a new telephony system. It has also completed pilots and rolled out phase 1 of Magic Notes software, and it is implementing a new performance management system. However, transformation is still at an early stage. The work done so far is helping the council to catch up on what is an important agenda for all councils. It is encouraging that the governance around transformation has been strengthened. There is now a corporate director lead and a senior board to oversee this work. The council has also appointed a chief digital and information officer to lead the transformation activity. This appointment is an important one as the council's ambition for transformation makes clear:

'Build on what we have achieved so far, to become a customer-centred, digital and insight-led council. We will modernise the way we work, embrace technology and data, and fix the basics to improve our services so they are more accessible, efficient and meet the challenging expectations of residents'.

Greater clarity has emerged on the themes that the council's transformation will focus on: the customer; the way the organisation works; and transforming the basics. The council has a clear vision and it has established the design principles for this work. Bringing the council up to date in its use of technology is undoubtedly important, but equally the council will need to ensure that the culture of the organisation reflects the new ways of working.

In its CPC report the peer team recognised that service level transformation had been taking place, but that a focus on corporate transformation was needed and that resources would be required. Transformation capacity is still small and it will require deft management to bring in resources, as required, to achieve outcomes. In the peer teams CPC report, the team noted that it was important to provide a clear transformation delivery plan, but this is not yet in place. A programme plan is required to enable a good understanding of when additional resources will be needed and to link savings from transformation into the medium-term financial strategy.

The council has yet to go live with its latest approach to transformation; there is a

5

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Eamonn O'Brien

Chief Executive (Interim): Jenny Rowlands

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

sense that after so many start-stop efforts in the past, transformation requires a sustained programme and the council wants to get this right. The peer team found a good degree of awareness among staff of the need for transformation. There was also an awareness that there was a change in approach, which was characterised by staff as ‘the council taking control’ following the work undertaken by consultants. The peer team consider that the approach to transformation is now much more authentically Herefordshire.

3.2 Key Recommendation 2: Use of data must be improved so that insights can flow to support service improvement and framing the scope of the transformation programme. There are lots of examples where this is taking place elsewhere and the council should draw on the experience of others to support this development.

In addition, the following was recommended:

- Strengthen corporate insight and data capability. While directorates demonstrate strong performance monitoring, the council should invest in corporate capacity to analyse data and generate cross-cutting insights. This will support more strategic decision-making and enable a clearer line of sight between performance, risk, and improvement.

We said in our peer challenge report that ‘Use of data must be improved so that insights can flow to support service improvement and framing the scope of the transformation programme.’ Work has gone into improving some performance management systems and the corporate performance and intelligence function has been reformed. The council has the right ambition but there is still a lot of work to be done in this area. The Council has procured a new performance management system (InPhase). This should enable the council to monitor strategic, operational and service level performance in one place and allow for data to be analysed more regularly and at a faster pace. Training on the new performance management system has been provided to staff and this should aid conversations about performance within the council, as the system generates greater transparency, and enhance the culture of continuous improvement. Turning performance data into insights and service design on a consistent basis is still work in progress and the council will want

6

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Eamonn O'Brien

Chief Executive (Interim): Jenny Rowlands

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

to ensure that it has the capacity and capability to achieve this to improve outcomes for communities. We note above that the council has taken control of its transformation, but it should still look outward to those councils who are further along on the journey to generating insights from data and understanding the impact of the council's services. As at March 2026 the [council report](#)ed that for Q3, 80 % of the delivery plan milestones for 2025/26 were completed or were on track and that only one of its top 10 indicators, 'number of people rough sleeping', was RAG rated red (away from target by more than 10%).

The improved public interface in public realm is an example where the council is starting to get to grips with performance and service delivery improvement. In this broad service area, the council has launched a single direct online platform which replaces multiple websites and phone numbers.

3.3 Key Recommendation 3: Carry out planned refresh of MTFs and provide some scenario planning for future years.

In addition, the following was recommended:

- Tightly manage the delivery of savings in 2025/26. The council has not delivered all planned savings in the past and it will want to ensure that programmes are robust and that the savings earmarked for 2025/26 are delivered.

The council's finances continue to be well managed. The council continues to deliver balanced outturn positions. The peer team noted in its CPC report that the council needed to manage tightly the delivery of savings in 2025/26. The council delivered £13.2 mil in savings in 2025/26 which was 84% of its target. That represented all of the approved savings for 2025/26 and 78% of the brought forward savings from previous years. The peer team was told that the savings challenge from 2026/27 to 2029/30 would continue to be tough. The outcome of the fair funding review reduces the council's allocation of funding from central government by £17.3 mil over the multi-year settlement period and the council will be looking for around £32 million in savings over this period. Continuing to achieve balanced budgets is everyone's responsibility, both elected Members and officers. A limited level of reserves means

there is little scope for delays, or failure, in delivering current savings plans. It bodes well that the finance team's efforts to engage with staff to provide briefings so that staff understand the strategic financial position of the council are well received.

In its CPC report the peer team highlighted the need for the council to provide scenario planning for future years as early as possible. The peer team were told that work had been underway on scenarios for 2027/28 since April 2026.

3.4 Key Recommendation 4: Strengthen and stabilise the internal capacity to overcome challenges in the thin-client model of delivery.

In addition, the following were recommended:

- Strengthen in-house capacity to deliver change. As the council seeks to transform and improve its service offer and achieve a long term sustainable financial position the council should consider strengthening its in-house capacity to oversee transformation, contractual and service change and improvement.
- Take advantage of the Voluntary sector's appetite to deliver. The council can ensure that the value of the voluntary sector as a delivery partner is recognised and acted upon across the council.

In the CPC report the peer team noted that the council would need to raise its internal capacity to manage contractors. Public Realm services moved back under council control on 1 June 2026, marking the start of a new chapter for highways and public realm services under a new model designed to give greater control and improved outcomes for residents. 53 staff have transferred into the council from the previous contractor to support the new model.

While this is an important step, the peer team consider that, given the council's ambition, there is a risk that capacity and capability constraints will hamper effective delivery and the council will need to be alive to when it is sensible to bring in extra resources.

The Peer team noted in its CPC report that the voluntary and community sector was very keen to support service delivery. The council is now establishing a commissioning framework for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector which will be used initially within the community wellbeing directorate. It will be important to monitor the impact of the framework.

3.5 Key Recommendation 5: Partners are very supportive, and the council can build on this to develop strategic engagement with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services.

In addition, the following were recommended:

- Lead the devolution debate locally. The national move is towards a greater focus on the role of strategic authorities, which is the route through which the government is pursuing devolution. It will be important for the council to lead, shape and seize opportunities on devolution in the sub-region. In doing so it should also continue to lobby government for a more flexible and sympathetic approach to supporting the opportunities associated with closer cross-border relationships.
- Focus the chief executives' board on delivery. It is relatively new but is well regarded and the council should take the opportunity to use to group to improve services through a focus on delivery and public service reform.
- Clarify and communicate growth leadership. The council should provide clearer and more visible leadership on its growth agenda, ensuring alignment across strategies and partnerships. This includes strengthening the role of the Business Board and clearly articulating the council's role in delivering the Herefordshire Big Economic Plan.
- Embed partnership working across the council. The council has a strong commitment to partnership working and it should build on the strength of individual senior relationships to develop a structured approach to partnership working across the organisation.

In the CPC report, the peer team noted that partners were very supportive and that the council could build on this.

Herefordshire council carries out partnership working across sectors through a range of groupings including the Business Growth Board the Skills Board and Economy and Place Board. There is also the Herefordshire CEOs' group which brings together public sector CEOs from across the county. In its CPC report the peer team called on the council to use the CEOs' group to focus on delivery and the council is moving this forward through a series of deep dives into key county topics. The peer team also heard that the CEOs' group was being replicated at the director and heads of service level which will provide structure for, and deepen, cross organisational working, which was a peer team recommendation.

In terms of growth leadership, the peer team called on the council to strengthen the role of the Business Board. The peer team was pleased to see that since its last visit the Business Board has led on the review of the Herefordshire Economic Plan and has developed a delivery plan. The Business Board has also become active in the devolution agenda, meeting with business organisations in prospective foundational strategic authority partner areas and writing to Ministers in support of the three-county proposal (Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire).

Herefordshire council is playing a leading role in the devolution discussions. From a Hereford perspective the three counties approach makes a lot of sense, but there are real challenges to getting this over the line. Representations to government from Gloucestershire indicate a preference for the establishment of a county wide strategic authority with the aim of joining the West of England Combined Authority. Herefordshire will need to continue its leadership role on this issue and will also need to work through other potential devolution options.

3.6 Adult Social Care

On the day that the Peer team undertook the progress review the council received the disappointing and frustrating result of its recent CQC inspection which rated the service as 'Requires Improvement'. However, within the CQC judgement there were

some good messages for the council including that 'Staff were passionate about supporting people in Herefordshire.' It is worth pulling out some of the comments from the CQC report because they speak to the corporate health of the organisation. CQC noted that: "There were clear governance, management and accountability arrangements at all levels within the local authority. These included corporate leadership functions, the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and Health and Wellbeing Board. The local authority's schemes of delegation for Care Act duties were clear and publicly available, supporting transparency in decision making and clear accountability."

On safeguarding the CQC stated 'National data indicated that people in Herefordshire felt safe. Safeguarding processes were clear and concerns were triaged quickly.'

Responding to the CQC judgement will be a significant priority for the council. As in all councils, demand for adult social care services continues to increase, cases are more complex and finances remain constrained. Improving the adult social care service will be challenging and will require a lot of member and managerial time. The peer team was encouraged by the staff's response to the judgement; staff were measured in their response and ready for the challenge.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Herefordshire Council for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Helen Murray (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority

and the Local Government Association (LGA) and their e-mail address is
helen.murray@local.gov.uk

Further information, support, and resources on LGR/Devolution, can be found on the
[LGA's devolution and LGR Hub website](#).



Herefordshire Council Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Statement May 2026



Introduction

In June 2025, Herefordshire Council hosted a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) managed by the Local Government Association (LGA). CPCs are part of a sector-led improvement initiative that enables local authorities to share expertise and support each other to improve. We welcomed a team of senior officer and member peers to review our performance, providing Herefordshire with an external perspective on our strengths, areas for development, and opportunities to drive organisational improvement.

This progress review position statement demonstrates how Herefordshire has proactively responded to the CPC over the past nine months through the delivery of our CPC Action Plan, approved by Cabinet in September 2025. It responds to the feedback received in the original peer challenge, reflecting on what has been achieved, exploring where delivery has faced challenges, and identifying what further action is needed. It forms part of our wider commitment to continuous improvement, learning, and transparency.

The Chief Executive is responsible for overall oversight, whilst relevant Directors have been assigned strategic owners of activity, to ensure ongoing accountability for progress against the plan. To track our progress in an accessible way, we have allocated a Blue, Red, Amber or Green (BRAG) rating to each of the actions:

- ✓ Action has been completed
- ✓ Action is on schedule for completion
- ✓ Action is at risk of not meeting completion date
- ✓ Action will not be delivered on schedule

Each rating is accompanied by more detailed narrative on what progress has been made.

As at May 2026, of the total 35 actions, 15 have been completed (Blue) with the remaining rated as Green. No actions are assessed as Amber or Red.

It is in this context we have produced this position statement and welcome the progress review, to continue to keep our focus on delivering the CPC recommendations and improving the organisation for partners, staff and residents.

Herefordshire Council's Corporate Peer Challenge 2025

From 23-26 June 2025, the LGA Peer Team conducted a robust programme of activity, including over 35 interviews and focus groups involving more than 100 participants – from council staff to residents, community partners and anchor institutions. The team also reviewed a range of strategic and operational documents, such as the Herefordshire Council Plan, Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Transformation Strategy, and our Annual Governance Statement. The full report with findings can be found on the LGA website [here](#).

The LGA final report concluded 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 LGA's final report included five key recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Transformation

Now need to focus on corporate transformation and provide the resources needed to deliver.

Recommendation 2: Data and Insights

Use of data must be improved so that insights can flow to support service improvement and framing the scope of the transformation programme. There are lots of examples where this is taking place elsewhere and the council should draw on the experience of others to support this development.

Recommendation 3: Medium term Financial Planning

Carry out planned refresh of MTFS and provide some scenario planning for future years.

Recommendation 4: Internal Capacity

Strengthen and stabilise the internal capacity to overcome challenges in the thin-client model of delivery.

Recommendation 5: Working with partners to deliver

Partners are very supportive, and the council can build on this to develop strategic engagement with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services.

The CPC action plan, approved by Cabinet in September 2025, responded to these key recommendations and also included other actions identified by the peer team in their report. These have all been included under the relevant key recommendations.

Progress so far

Substantial progress has been made against key deliverables by the council, since our CPC in June 2025. Key highlights include:

The council's "year of delivery" began in August 2025, with work starting on a new multi-million-pound **Transport Hub** in Hereford. The hub, which is now nearly complete, will integrate key travel connections, making it easier to move around and connect by train, bus, car, bike, taxi or on foot, and forms part of a wider Local Transport Plan shaped by public input. Over the following months, other major infrastructure projects began, including active travel and safer schools routes schemes, flood alleviation, and employment land development. As of the time of writing, the council is on track to complete nine major transport projects within the next 18 months, improving connectivity, safety and accessibility for tens of thousands of residents, commuters, workers and visitors.

In September 2025, the council's **adult social care services** were assessed by the Care Quality Commission. The report will be published at the end of May 2026, with expected strengths including keeping people safe, strong quality assurance and oversight, dedicated, professional and compassionate staff, and partnership working. Improvement work will focus on reducing waiting times for assessment and specific services, and strengthening support for unpaid carers.

In October, Herefordshire Council joined local parish councils to launch a new **Charter for Herefordshire's Councils**, marking a renewed commitment to collaborative working and stronger local governance. Following nearly two years of joint development, the charter establishes common service standards, promotes partnership working in key areas like planning and highways, and introduces a structured approach to resolving issues between councils.

Broader partnerships have also been strengthened through structures such as the Herefordshire Chief Executives' Group and the Herefordshire Partners Group, enabling coordinated action across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The council has also played a leading role in sub-regional devolution discussions, working with neighbouring authorities and partners to develop proposals for a foundational strategic authority and position the area for future opportunities.

For the second year running, the council became the first UK local authority to receive a clean bill of health from external auditors for its **annual accounts**, confirming that its 2024/25 financial reporting was accurate and error-free. This reflects strong financial governance, transparency and a clear commitment to managing public funds responsibly and to the highest standards of accountability.

In November, Herefordshire Council set out an ambitious new **Local Transport Plan** aimed at giving residents greater choice and improving journeys across the county, with proposals covering roads, public transport, walking and cycling. Shaped by public and stakeholder input, it focuses on addressing different challenges in the city, market towns and rural areas, with the overall aim of boosting connectivity, supporting economic growth and enhancing quality of life.

Between December 2025 and January 2026, the council launched its **Budget and Council Tax consultation** for 2026/27, inviting residents, businesses and groups to give views on

how services should be prioritised, where savings could be made and how the budget should be balanced.

In January 2026, **Children's Services** was rated 'Good' overall by Ofsted, with each specific service area receiving a 'Good' judgement and the 'Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families' judged as 'Outstanding' in a report published at the time. Ofsted found that "Children's Services are rightly considered a high priority for the Council" and said "a visible and effective leadership team, supported by corporate and political leaders, has enabled vast improvements in the services delivered to children and their families, with particular pace and vision led by the Corporate Director of Children's Services, who is aspirational for children and committed to enhancing their lives".

In February 2026, informed by the public consultation and other inputs, the council approved its **2026/27 capital and revenue budgets**, setting out major investment in the county's future while protecting public services. It set out a comprehensive plan to close a significant funding gap due to the Government's Fair Funding Review not meeting growing and more complex demands, especially in a rural setting.

Herefordshire Council and its partners launched a new "**Invest in Herefordshire**" service and website to attract business investment, support economic growth and create better-paid jobs. The initiative provides a clear gateway for companies looking to relocate, expand or invest, bringing together information on key sectors, development opportunities, available premises and local support. Backed by a promotional campaign showcasing Herefordshire's strengths, including its £3.6 billion economy, strong business base and quality of life, the service aims to position the county as a competitive destination for investors and skilled workers.

In March, Herefordshire Council, alongside partners including schools, businesses and community groups, launched **Child Friendly Herefordshire**, a long-term initiative aimed at making the county a place where every child feels included, valued, happy, healthy and safe. The programme places children and young people at the heart of decision-making, with a strong focus on listening to their views and improving opportunities, wellbeing and support.

Herefordshire's '**Back the Bypass**' campaign was officially launched in March 2026, with council leaders, business representatives and other stakeholders coming together to support the project designed to tackle long-standing congestion, improve connectivity and create the conditions for jobs and economic growth. At the same time, **Ross-on-Wye Enterprise Park** was also launched. The 17-acre strategic employment site will become one of Herefordshire's largest business hubs and has the potential to support around 600 jobs once fully developed. The development will provide high-quality employment space for a range of growing businesses and forms part of the council's wider programme to support economic growth, attract inward investment and create more better-paid jobs.

In May 2026, the council confirmed it had delivered a **balanced budget for 2025/26** despite significant funding and demand pressures. This outturn reflected strong financial management and the efforts of directorates to control spending while continuing to deliver good quality services and meet demand. This enabled the council to deliver £13.2 million in savings while managing key cost pressures in adult social care, SEND, home-to-school transport and temporary accommodation. In addition, the council delivered £86.0 million in capital investment during the year, including fully utilising highways and local transport grants.

Over the last six months, the council has been preparing to transition its largest single contract. M Group Highways will deliver the new **Public Realm Services contract** starting on 1 June 2026. The multi-million-pound contract covers maintenance of roads and green spaces, highway drainage, street lighting, street cleansing, bereavement services, bus shelters, rights of way and winter gritting. Under the new contract, the council will take back day-to-day control of public realm services, with the provider delivering work at pre-agreed rates, giving greater flexibility and ensuring high-quality, efficient services that deliver excellent value for money.

Internally, key highlights include a stronger and more coordinated approach to **transformation** now being in place, led by a Corporate Transformation Board established in summer 2025. A structured programme has been developed around core themes, supported by updated digital and transformation strategies and strengthened governance arrangements. The Corporate Intelligence and Performance function has been strengthened to improve insight and support service improvement, particularly in social care. Data quality has improved alongside investment in systems and infrastructure, including a new performance management platform.

The council has continued to deliver on its **workforce priorities**, including the launch of a new corporate recruitment video: [Delivering the best for Herefordshire](#), the introduction of THRIVE values-based recruitment to help embed our values, and appointments have been made to the key roles of Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Economy and Environment. Workforce planning and development activity has continued to strengthen, with effective use of the apprenticeship levy resulting in 62 apprentices by December 2025, the piloting of a new workforce planning model, delivery of our leadership development programme called Lead@HC and the launch of a digital skills development offer for all employees in April. Work to support equality, diversity and inclusion has included active engagement with staff networks, delivery of a staff networks day and refreshed EDI resources and intranet content.

Overall, the council has made **strong and sustained progress** in response to the CPC, with all actions either completed or on track. Clearer governance, stronger financial management, improved use of data, increased organisational capacity and deeper partnership working are driving delivery. This is reflected not only in strengthened internal performance but also in visible outcomes for residents, including infrastructure investment, improved services, economic growth activity and positive external assurance. However, while we are pleased with the progress achieved, we are not complacent. We welcome further challenge and scrutiny so we can build on this momentum through the 2026/27 Delivery Plan and continue improving outcomes for Herefordshire's communities.

Progress update

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
KR1	Now need to focus on corporate transformation and provide the resources needed to deliver.	Establish Corporate Transformation Board to drive direction for transformation and ensure delivery.	A corporate transformation board has been established and in place since August 2025. The board is chaired by the CEX and meets monthly to set the direction and ambitions for transformation, drive delivery and manage strategic risk and resources.		Director of HR and OD
		Commission review of the council's transformation resources to ensure the right skills and resources to deliver our transformation ambitions.	In August 2025, council commissioned SOCITM to undertake a review of the council's transformation capacity from a digital perspective. One of the key findings of that work was a lack of internal digital transformation expertise. The council is implementing the SOCITM recommendations including the appointment of an interim Chief Digital and Information Officer who is leading the council's transformation activity.		
		Develop a clearly articulated transformation delivery plan which sets out the investment required and the profile of savings to be delivered.	A corporate transformation programme of work is being developed around the three key themes of 'Fix the basics', 'The way we work' and 'Customer'. The council's digital and transformation strategies are being updated to reflect the new approach and to ensure the council has the right conditions for success.		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
		Ensure the timeliness of feedback to scrutiny on decisions.	Scrutiny recommendations are reported on at each scrutiny meeting – escalation routes (managed by the statutory scrutiny officer) have been established to notify the Corporate Leadership Team about any scrutiny recommendations at risk of not being responded to within the constitutionally required two-month completion period. A new recommendation action tracker is being developed alongside the current arrangements. The dedicated scrutiny web pages are being updated to include information on task and finish group reports and recommendations made by the committees. This will provide greater public visibility. Strengthened communications activity to highlight the work of scrutiny is actively being considered.		Director of Governance and Legal Services
		Review training for councillors.	A review of the mandatory training was undertaken by the Member Development Working group in July/August 2025 and the second round of mandatory training was undertaken during September to November 2025. All training was recorded and placed on the Councillors Intranet site as a resource for members to utilise on an ongoing basis (for the remainder of this administrative term).		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			A member survey was circulated following the mandatory training requesting feedback on the quality of the training modules provided. A good to very good satisfaction rate was returned. Feedback from the survey will be used by the member development working group to inform continuing improvements to the two-yearly mandated training programme.		
		Strengthen the council's brand and review both its internal and external communications to achieve this end.	New multi-year communications strategy has been developed and approved, aligned with Council Plan pillars and timeline. It includes capability plan to bolster nine key areas, including channels, content, commissioning and coordination. The most recent performance data underlines improvements in reach, followers, engagements and video views. From February to April 2026, social media performance showed strong overall growth compared to the same period in 2025, with gains across most key metrics and channels. Audience growth was positive across Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, with LinkedIn seeing the highest percentage increase (+18%), followed by Facebook (+14%) and Instagram (+11%) - overall net increase of nearly 4,000 followers. Organic reach improved significantly, driven particularly by LinkedIn and Instagram, both	✓	Director of Communications

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			more than doubling year-on-year (+223% and +221% respectively). Facebook also delivered solid reach growth (+13%), contributing to an overall increase of 257,000 impressions. The most notable gains were in video performance. Overall video-related reach increased by more than 600,000, underlining the effectiveness of video content as a key driver of visibility and engagement. Key stakeholders, including local newspaper editor, have noted our responsiveness to media enquiries has “significant improved”. Cabinet members have also expressed “big improvements” in communications and are seeing more higher quality content being published helping to tell the story of the council. There is growing evidence of increased impact of communications, for example the current campaign to secure subscriptions for the new garden waste service has seen higher rates of sign-ups than expected and targets ahead of schedule. Recruitment marketing has also contributed to increased interest and applications of key roles, particularly in children’s services. We are now engaging audiences more directly through local online community groups, and a number of campaigns have		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			supported core organisational priorities, including children's services recruitment. New channels have been developed, including Viva Engage, which now reaches 91% of staff, enabling them to communicate to and with each other more easily, while providing a more engaging platform for leadership to share key messages and resources. The comms operating model is currently being reviewed, with options for the new model being considered for implementation from Q2 2026/27.		
KR2	Use of data must be improved so that insights can flow to support service improvement and framing the scope of the transformation programme. There are lots of examples where this is taking place elsewhere and the council should draw on the experience of others to support this development.	Review the council's Corporate Intelligence & Performance function to strengthen its role in supporting strategic planning, service improvement and transformation	The Corporate Intelligence & Performance (CP&I) function has undergone a restructure to enhance the data provisions for adult and children social care. CP&I is currently refreshing the service planning process and will be revising the Performance Management Framework during 2026/27.		Director of Finance
		Deliver planned improvements to data quality at source.	There have been significant improvements to data quality over the past 18 months on Mosaic with further enhancements due to take place during 2026/27. A new project has been set up to rebuild the data warehouse for Children Social Care as part of the Families First Programme.		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
		Improve self-service, empowering staff to access insight directly through dashboard and drill-down tools.	Significant improvements have been made in Adult and Children Social Care self-service options, including dashboards and drill-down tools. To record and monitor performance against corporate KPIs and delivery plan milestones, a new system (InPhase) has been procured and training has been rolled out within CP&I to administer the system. This will support the self-serve options by creating bespoke reporting on corporate KPIs and delivery plan milestones for officers at all tiers and councillors alike.		
		Upskill staff in data literacy and visual analytics.	InPhase (performance management system) training has been delivered. A new post dedicated to improving technical skillset in SQL and data warehousing has been filled to support Children Social Care.		
		Proactively use equalities data to inform decision-making and ensure that inclusive practice is consistently applied in both internal culture and external service delivery	Training to strengthen the consideration of equality impact assessments was delivered to service areas as part of the development of the 2026/27 budget. This training included information on sources of diversity data to support EIAs (Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, population and census data) and guidance in respect of the consultation process. Assessments completed as part of the budget setting process considered the equality impact of saving proposals and		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			changes in service delivery and these were actively considered and reviewed by Cabinet and subject to appropriate challenge through the scrutiny and consultation process. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training was one of the five modules of mandatory training in the council's Programme for 2025. The EIA guidance document has been revised to incorporate details of how cost increases impact on certain protected characteristics and a new template form has been developed to ensure compliance on completion of EIAs and/or Equality Impact Screening Checklists.		
KR3	Bring forward refresh of MTFS and provide some scenario planning for future years.	Report to Cabinet in September 2025 on the impact of local authority funding reform on the council's future financial position.	An update on the key headlines from the June 2025 Spending Review and potential impact of local authority funding reform on the council's future financial position was presented to Cabinet in September 2025. The report highlighted the redistribution of funding through the Fair Funding Review 2.0 and the estimated impact for Herefordshire. An updated funding gap estimate was identified and reported to Cabinet and a clear approach and budget setting timetable outlined to balance the budget for 2026/27 and close the future funding gap.		Director of Finance

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
		Continue to review the financial position through the 2026-2027 budget setting cycle.	Performance against the 2025/26 approved revenue budget and capital programme was reported to Cabinet throughout the year via quarterly updates. Monthly Directorate Budget Boards and Directorate expenditure control panels continued in 2025/26 with oversight of monthly financial position and performance by Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet. Additional information to highlight and advise of financial plans for 2026/27 and the medium term period was provided throughout the period from September to February budget setting through dedicated briefings to Portfolio holders, Cabinet, Leadership Group, Group Leaders, individual political groups, Members of Scrutiny Management Board and key messages were shared with all staff via All Staff Briefings. An Annual Review of Earmarked Reserves was presented to Cabinet in February 2026 as part of the budget setting process. The Earmarked Reserves and General Policy Statement sets out the council's approach to maintaining appropriate levels of reserves and general balances to meet known future commitments and to mitigate against unforeseen future events. The review identifies forecast reserve balances	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			to 31 March 2027 and a risk assessed minimum level of general fund balances. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position and impact of SEND Reform and the High Needs Stability Grant on the council's overall financial position has been reported through Schools Forum, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.		
		Continue to tightly manage the delivery of the 2025-2026 savings.	The delivery of savings has been monitored robustly throughout 2025/26 through monthly Directorate Budget Boards and dedicated Directorate Saving Boards. The outturn position for 2025/26 confirmed delivery of 2025/26 approved savings in full (£3.9m approved savings in Children & Young People) and delivery of £9.3m of the £11.9m savings brought forward from previous years. Savings not delivered in year have been mitigated within the balanced outturn position and will be carried forward for delivery alongside approved savings in 2026/27.		
		Embed the risk management strategy across the council and its activities.	The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Cabinet have undertaken quarterly reviews of the Corporate Risk Register to update risk scores, consider the adequacy of control measures and mitigating actions and identify new threats and opportunities to the delivery of the objectives and priorities of the Council Plan 2024-28.		

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			The council's 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan has been reviewed to ensure it is aligned to the refreshed Risk Strategy and risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register. A consistent Risk Register template to record and monitor individual Directorate, Service and Project risks has been developed with automated links and escalation flags; this template aligns risks to the council's approved Risk Strategy and Risk Appetite Statement. A SharePoint site and Teams channel has been established to share guidance, training and enable interaction between risk owners Training was delivered to the council's Leadership Group in September 2025.		
		Ensure that the audit committee is delivering robust challenge and appropriate assurance.	The Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee was presented to the Committee in June 2025. The report highlights the activity and impact of the work of the Committee throughout 2024/25. The 2025/26 Report will be presented in June 2026. The Committee has exercised healthy challenge of the statutory accounts process and external audit assurance framework, Code of Conduct and complaints, whistleblowing arrangements, fraud, risk and information governance issues.	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			In 2025/26, alongside the activity identified above, the Committee supported changes to the Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, minimise risk of fraud and ensure the council can demonstrate effective, efficient and economical use of public resources.		
KR4	Strengthen and stabilise the internal capacity to overcome challenges in the thin-client model of delivery.	- Strengthen internal capacity in relation to the public realm contract - Strengthen contract management across the council	The new public realm contract goes live on 1 June 2026. 53 staff are being transferred back into the council in order to strengthen internal capacity and contract management.	✓	Corporate Director Economy and Environment
KR5	Partners are very supportive, and the council can build on this to develop strategic engagement with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services.	Develop a co-produced commissioning framework with the voluntary and community sector.	This work is underway being led by the Director of Commissioning. A new low entry commissioning framework will be in place from July 2026 that can be used by the whole council but will initially support the wider engagement of the VCSE within Community Wellbeing Directorate.	✓	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
		Co-produce a robust social value approach as part of the council's wider commissioning and procurement, initially with the public realm contract.	The social value approach is being developed initially with ACEOM who are engaged with the work on the Southern Link Road. Learning from this work will inform the development of a consistent offer across all contracts.	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
		Lead the growth agenda, ensuring alignment across strategies and partnerships.	We have proactively led sub-regional engagement in identifying a future basis for devolution through establishing a proposed Foundational Local Authority and Spatial Development Strategy area – the Three Counties (Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire). Government wrote to the council on 12 February 2026 seeking expressions of interests on the creation of new Foundational Authorities in the areas outside of existing Mayoral Authorities. Herefordshire's Leader and CEO led engagement with all neighbouring counterparts to explore options. We held extensive local engagement with all key stakeholder groups, considering an in-depth evidence base we had established to guide the best possible future for the county. This included the Herefordshire Business Growth Board, the Skills Board, Public Sector CEOs, the Herefordshire Public Sector Leaders Group, all elected members, and local MPs overseen by our political Group Leaders. The unanimous outcome was support for a Three Counties Foundational Strategic Authority, which builds on our long-term collective strengths in defence and security, inter-dependent supply chains and workforce, shared economic aspirations, and integrated infrastructure.		Corporate Director Economy and Environment

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			We have also continued to play a leading role in the Marches Forward Partnership with Powys, Monmouthshire, and Shropshire through initiatives such as the Green Growth Environmental Investment Platform.		
		Strengthen the role of the Business Board.	The recent and future devolution discussions have given the Business Growth Board a clear focus and added impetus. A joint meeting of the Herefordshire Business Growth Board and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership was held in early March 2026. The private sector representatives identified significant economic opportunities and shared goals, supported a future devolution relationship along with Gloucestershire (writing to government in support of this future direction). They have committed to carrying on these discussions in seeking to develop a devolution 'ask' and are seeking to engage the Gloucestershire Business Board too. The Herefordshire Business Growth Board has also led a review of the Herefordshire Economic Plan and established a delivery plan. This will provide further focus of activity for the Board to drive forward.	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
		Articulate the council's role in delivering the Herefordshire Big Economic Plan.	The Herefordshire Business Growth Board, Skills Board and Economy and Place Board have all played a key role in reviewing the Economic Plan and led the development of a new delivery plan. The Plan identifies a wide range of actions to be delivered over the next three years. A significant number of the actions are identified for the council to lead (infrastructure, employment land, housing, and business support).		
		Lead, shape and seize opportunities on devolution in the sub-region.	Herefordshire Council has played a key sub-regional leadership role in identifying a future direction for devolution. The council formed a Leader and CEO working group with counterparts across Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, as well engaging with Shropshire and Telford. We established an evidence-based approach to reviewing all localised opportunities for forming a Foundational Strategic Authority. We formed a Steering Group of the political Group Leaders, and fully engaged public sector, community, private sector leaders as well as all locally elected members and MPs. This comprehensive approach led to unanimous local support for a Three Counties (Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire) Foundational		Chief Executive

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			Strategic Authority, which we submitted to government on 20 March 2026. While government considers this response, we are now developing a devolution ‘ask’ as a basis of firming a future devolution deal with our Three Counties partner authorities.		
		Continue to lobby government for a more flexible and sympathetic approach to supporting the opportunities associated with closer cross-border relationships.	We continue to play a leading role in the Marches Forward Partnership. At the request of the four local authorities, MHCLG has established a national cross department working group to continue to lobby to support local opportunities. The Partnership also continues to seek government support wherever possible, including support from Defra for the proposed Green Growth Environmental Investment Platform. We also submitted a joint bid to the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) fund. We are also working with MFP partners on a ministerial engagement plan (with UK and Welsh Governments) to lobby for the region and promote its opportunities, with Parliamentary and Senedd receptions being arranged for later this year. A new MFP LinkedIn group has also been developed to allow members of each council (and respective partners) to share	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			announcements, content and contacts on this professional platform.		
		Use the Herefordshire Chief Executives' Group (HCEG) to improve services through a focus on delivery and public service reform.	The HCEG continues to develop, with strong collaboration cited by all members, and is now equipped with a unifying narrative. Highlights have included deep-dives into neighbourhood health, market town development plans and the recent adoption of Child Friendly Herefordshire policy – all to improve broader understanding and buy-in. More recently, the group have explored the topic of devolution and this is now discussed as a standing item to ensure ongoing shared understanding of current policy changes, foundational strategic authorities proposals and alignment with other public sector reform and boundary changes, including in policing, health (new ICB clusters) and Fire and Rescue services. A new Herefordshire Directors Group (HCEG sub-group) has also been established and has set out a work programme and set of priorities, including neighbourhood health, housing, employment and skills. These form the basis of two upcoming summits this year to improve multi-agency collaboration on two key determinants of health and wellbeing: housing and employment. The group has sponsored the development of a LinkedIn Group giving public sector leaders in	✓	

Ref.	Recommendations from the corporate peer team	Actions	Progress update – January 2026	RAG Rating	Lead officer
			Herefordshire a professional platform to share content, announcements and contacts. The HCEG has also nurtured the wider Herefordshire Partners Group (HPG), which now brings together – at a strategic level – statutory as well as voluntary sector leaders, and businesses representative organisations and civil society organisations. The HPG has become a unique public, private and third-sector forum to share information, insights and progress on key issues affecting Herefordshire (devolution, ICB strategic commissioning and neighbourhood health, fair funding review) and also the opportunities for closer working on key themes to have a greater impact (investment in digital and data capacity, infrastructure and growth).		

Next steps

Herefordshire Council will continue to transform in line with its vision of “Delivering the best for Herefordshire in everything we do”. Key developments in 2026 will shape the future direction of the council – the appointment of the new Chief Executive in June 2026, the development and implementation of the Future Financial Strategy in the light of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and the implementation of the 2026-2027 Delivery Plan.

The 2026-2027 Delivery Plan reflects the breadth of services and programmes for the year ahead. In children’s services, the council will continue to strengthen early help support, develop new alternative provision and advance further investment in schools. The plan also reaffirms the council’s ambition to deliver Child Friendly Herefordshire, ensuring children and young people are at the heart of local decision making and that services, spaces and opportunities across the county are designed to help every child feel included, valued, happy, healthy and safe in their homes and communities.

The council will continue to drive major upgrades across the transport network – progressing the Hereford Transport Hub, Holme Lacy Road corridor and Aylestone Hill improvements, while also expanding and enhancing local bus services. The plan confirms the council’s intention to begin construction of phase one of the Hereford Bypass, marking a significant step toward delivering long term congestion relief and improved strategic connectivity for the county.

The council will continue delivering one of its most significant highways investment programmes to date, reflecting residents’ priorities around potholes, safer travel and better maintained roads. More than £37 million is being invested across 2025/26 and into 2026/27 in resurfacing, surface dressing, drainage and road safety improvements, with over 140 schemes planned across the network, from key A and B roads to neighbourhood streets. This includes £12 million for resurfacing and preventative treatments to reduce pothole formation, building on recent programmes that have delivered around 100 miles of improvements, repaired 25,000 potholes, upgraded crossings and signage, and strengthened routes that support daily life, commuting and business across Herefordshire.

Housing and community resilience form a core part of the plan, with commitments to expand emergency accommodation through refurbishment of council owned properties, accelerate housing delivery on council sites, develop transitional accommodation, and progress the flood alleviation works at Merton Meadow and Essex Arms. The council will also continue work with registered providers and Homes England to bring more affordable homes forward, while addressing homelessness through strengthened prevention and winter provision.

The environment and climate portfolio will deliver the new Carbon Management Plan, expand home energy efficiency schemes, progress the next phase of integrated wetlands, contribute to the Catchment Management Plan for the River Wye, publish the Nutrient Management Plan and advance the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The council will continue to help strengthen the local economy by supporting business growth across the county. This includes progressing key employment sites such as the Ross Enterprise Park and expanding the network of business hubs in market towns, giving local enterprises the space, infrastructure and advice they need to thrive.

A renewed focus on attracting inward investment will see the council champion Herefordshire's high value sectors and raise the county's profile as a dynamic place to do business. Close collaboration with the defence, cyber and security cluster, alongside promotion of innovation led industries, will help draw new investors, employers and skilled professionals into the county.

To support long term growth, the council will work with partners, including NMiTE and the Skills Board to strengthen pathways into education, training and higher skilled employment. These programmes will equip residents with the skills needed by local employers, broaden career opportunities and help ensure businesses can access a strong and future ready workforce.

The council will continue to modernise operations, including a new delivery model for SEND home to school transport, an updated commissioning strategy, improvements to procurement, and further digital transformation – building on successful pilots of artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and free-up time for frontline staff.

Financially, the plan is supported by a stable and well managed position, with the council taking effective action throughout the year and delivering strong performance. The Delivery Plan will operate within the balanced 2026/27 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, with risks closely monitored through established governance and performance frameworks.

The council will build on its workforce insights with the launch of the 2026 Employee Survey from June, alongside a comprehensive review of competencies and qualifications to reinforce the corporate learning framework. Key developments for the next year will include the introduction of a new Learning Management System and expanded self-help learning offer, delivery of a senior leadership programme, and continued investment in EDI through mentoring, buddying and improved data quality. Support for managers and employees will be enhanced through refreshed 1:1 resources and change toolkits, while digital capability will be developed through our digital skills offer.

We look forward to welcoming members of the Corporate Peer Challenge Team back to Herefordshire to talk through the progress we have made in the last year and to receive their thoughts on our future direction of travel.



Title of report: Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026 - 2041

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Report by: Cabinet member roads and regulatory services;

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

A report on the proposed 15 year strategy for parking to be adopted by Herefordshire Council

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) That the new Parking Strategy for Herefordshire is adopted by cabinet;
- b) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Operating Officer for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Roads and Regulatory Services to take all operational decisions to implement the Parking Strategy and its delivery plan.

Alternative options

Do not adopt the Parking Strategy – This would mean the council lacks a strategic framework for parking and enforcement infrastructure, missing out on adopting a strategy that has aims to deliver the

council objectives and priorities and has been adapted to focus on the priorities the public have detailed in their consultation responses.

1. Adopt an alternative strategy – this would mean the priorities of the council and those the public have expressed would be ignored.

Key considerations

2. The proposed Herefordshire Parking Strategy is a key strategic document that will establish the long-term framework for how parking is managed, enforced and developed across the county. The strategy provides the overarching principles for parking, including safety, accessibility, enforcement, technology and the role of parking in supporting town centres and the wider transport network. Its adoption ensures a consistent and coordinated approach to parking management, supporting wider transport, economic and place-making objectives.
3. The current approach to parking management requires strengthening in response to increasing demand, changing travel behaviours, and evolving national policy and best practice. Whilst existing policies and operational approaches are in place, there is no single, up-to-date strategic framework guiding decision-making. This presents several challenges:
 - a. Safety and Network Impact: Evidence from the public consultation (472 responses) demonstrates that over 80% of respondents consider safety to be important or very important when using parking. Respondents identified widespread issues relating to unsafe and obstructive parking, particularly at junctions, around schools and within residential areas.
 - b. Inconsistent Approach: Without an agreed strategic framework, parking decisions are often made on a scheme-by-scheme basis, which can lead to inconsistency in delivery, enforcement and disproportionate prioritisation across the county.
 - c. Enforcement Challenges: Consultation responses highlight strong support for addressing parking issues through enforcement; however, views vary on the method of delivery, particularly in relation to the use of technology-enabled enforcement, indicating the need for a clear and balanced policy position to allow the council to improve its parking facilities.
 - d. Accessibility and Inclusion: Feedback identified concerns regarding the availability and suitability of parking provision, particularly for disabled users, demonstrating the need for a more consistent and inclusive approach.
4. Cabinet is asked to approve the adoption of the Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026–2041. This will provide a clear strategic framework to guide future parking policies, investment and operational decisions, ensuring alignment with the council's wider transport and place-based priorities.
- 4a The Parking Strategy is essential to deliver council priorities and objectives:
 - a. It will provide a coordinated approach to parking management, ensuring that decisions are aligned with wider transport strategy, including the Local Transport Plan, and supporting sustainable travel, economic growth and the vitality of town centres.
 - b. It supports key council priorities, including:
 - i. Improving safety on the network by prioritising enforcement and design interventions in high-risk locations such as junctions and school environments.

- c. Supporting accessibility and inclusion by improving the consistency and quality of parking provision for all users.
 - d. Supporting economic growth by ensuring that parking provision enables access to town centres, businesses and key destinations.
 - e. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of parking services through clearer policy direction and prioritisation.
5. The strategy will impact a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, businesses, visitors and service users across Herefordshire. The consultation process has demonstrated strong engagement, with clear trends emerging around safety, enforcement and accessibility. These findings align with wider national trends, where local authorities are increasingly adopting more proactive and structured approaches to parking management.
 6. Without the adoption of the strategy, there is a risk that parking management will continue to be reactive and inconsistent, leading to ongoing safety concerns, reduced effectiveness of enforcement, and missed opportunities to support wider transport and economic objectives.
 7. A communications plan will be implemented to support the adoption of the strategy, ensuring that stakeholders, including residents, businesses and local councils, are informed of the outcomes of the consultation and the next steps. This will be delivered through the council website, stakeholder networks and targeted engagement where required.
 8. Performance and outcomes will be monitored through existing service measures, including enforcement activity, compliance levels and customer feedback, with progress reported through established governance arrangements.

Community impact

9. The Herefordshire Parking Strategy will contribute to a range of corporate priorities and wider policy objectives, including those set out in the council's Corporate Plan, Local Transport Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy. In particular, the strategy supports the council's ambitions to improve safety, accessibility and quality of place, recognising the role that effective parking management plays in supporting healthy, sustainable communities and enabling access to services, employment and local centres.
10. The development of the strategy has been informed by a robust local evidence base, including public consultation, operational experience and wider policy context. A total of 472 responses were received to the consultation, providing both quantitative and qualitative feedback. This demonstrated strong community concern regarding unsafe and obstructive parking, particularly at junctions, around schools and within residential areas, as well as issues relating to accessibility, including the provision of disabled parking. These findings are consistent with local operational evidence and align with wider trends identified through transport and place-based strategies.
11. The strategy has also been informed by ongoing engagement with internal services and partners, including highways, enforcement and planning functions, to ensure a coordinated and deliverable approach.
12. The strategy will have a direct impact on residents, businesses and visitors across Herefordshire. By prioritising safety and improving consistency in parking management, it is expected to have a positive impact on community wellbeing, particularly through reducing unsafe parking behaviours and improving access to key services and destinations.

13. There are no identified direct impacts on children in care, care leavers or care experienced young people because of adopting the strategy. However, in line with the council's corporate parenting responsibilities, the potential indirect benefits of improved safety, accessibility and access to services are recognised as supporting better outcomes for all residents, including vulnerable groups.

Environmental impact

14. The adoption of the Herefordshire Parking Strategy aligns with Herefordshire Council's environmental policy and the County Plan's success measures. It supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, and increase the number of short-distance trips made by sustainable modes of travel. By managing parking demand and availability, the strategy helps influence travel behaviour and supports a gradual shift away from private car use where appropriate, contributing to reduced congestion and vehicle emissions.
15. It is important to note that the objectives of the Local Transport Plan is to provide travel choice to those traveling in Herefordshire; whether that be by car, bus, walking cycling, this is reflected by the past the strategy covers cars, cycling, train and car share.
16. The strategy also supports improvements in local environmental quality by addressing inefficient vehicle movements such as circulating and idling, particularly in busy urban areas. Through more effective parking management and enforcement, it contributes to improved air quality and safer, more accessible environments within town centres and communities as it ensures appropriate facilities are where people want them stopping the need for circulating to find a space. Whilst the strategy itself does not directly deliver green infrastructure, it enables better use of public space and supports wider initiatives aimed at improving the quality of place and access to local amenities.
17. Where parking interventions or services are delivered through external contractors, environmental considerations will be embedded within service specifications. This will include requirements to minimise waste and resource use, reduce energy and carbon emissions, and align with the council's carbon reduction commitments. These requirements will be monitored through ongoing contract management where applicable.

Equality duty

18. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying due regard in its decision making in the design of policies and the delivery of services.
19. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been identified as having a low equality impact. As a strategic framework, the Parking Strategy does not directly introduce specific schemes; however, it will guide future decisions and interventions.
20. Due to the potential impact of this decision being low, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. However, the following equality considerations should be taken into account when making a decision:
 - a. Accessibility and disabled users: The strategy reinforces the protection and prioritisation of disabled users, recognising the importance of accessible, appropriate and enforceable parking provision. Consultation responses highlighted concerns regarding disabled parking availability and misuse. The strategy provides a clear

framework to strengthen compliance, improve provision and ensure that future parking decisions support the needs of disabled users.

- b. Safety and vulnerable groups: The strategy places a strong emphasis on improving safety, including addressing obstructive parking at junctions, around schools and in residential areas. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on vulnerable groups, including elderly people, children and people with mobility impairments.
- c. Fair and proportionate enforcement: While there is support for improved enforcement, consultation responses indicate varying views on delivery methods. Care should be taken to ensure that enforcement approaches remain proportionate, transparent and do not disproportionately impact any particular group.

Resource implications

- 21. Funding to support the initial delivery of the Parking Strategy has been identified within existing budgets. A total of £350,000 has been allocated within the Local Transport Grant for the delivery of both the Parking Strategy and Freight Strategy in the current financial year. No additional funding is being requested as part of this decision.
- 22. Future resource implications will be dependent on the specific schemes and interventions brought forward to deliver the strategy. Any projects beyond those deliverable within the current financial year allocation will require separate approval and will be supported by individual business cases, including full financial, operational and risk assessments. Funding for these projects will be considered through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and, where appropriate, the capital programme.
- 23. The implementation of the strategy also includes a change in service responsibility for the maintenance of council-owned car parks. As Property Services does not hold a dedicated budget for this function, responsibility for maintenance will be transferred to the Parking Service; maintenance and improved safety of the car parks has been a clear priority from the public consultation therefore this change will allow the council to focus and prioritise what the public want. Associated costs will be met through parking income, which will be reinvested into the maintenance and management of parking assets, supporting a more sustainable and self-contained service model.
- 24. There are no immediate ICT, property or human resource implications arising directly from the adoption of the strategy. Any future changes in these areas, including the introduction of new technology or infrastructure, will be considered as part of subsequent decision reports.
- 25. Given that there are no committed additional costs associated with the adoption of the strategy at this stage, further financial information cannot be provided at this time. These will be included as part of the requirements for future project-specific approvals.

Legal implications

- 26. The adoption of the Herefordshire Parking Strategy does not in itself commit the council to changes in parking charges or income. The strategy establishes a strategic framework for parking management and identifies areas for future improvement, including potential infrastructure enhancements such as additional parking provision, including multi-storey facilities, and the expansion of residents' parking schemes. The costs associated with these improvements are not included within this report and will be subject to separate business cases and decision-making.

27. Although specific proposals are not included within this report, section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 requires that certain revenue from designated parking spaces (on/off street enforcement activities and on-street parking charges) must be accounted separately and used for the purposes of parking expenditure. Any surpluses may only be used for parking or certain transport related purposes such as the provision and maintenance of off street parking, road maintenance/improvements or bus services.
28. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

29. The adoption of the Herefordshire Parking Strategy presents a number of strategic, operational and reputational risks, which have been identified alongside associated mitigation measures.

Risk / Opportunity	Mitigation
Lack of delivery following adoption: As the strategy is a high-level framework, there is a risk that benefits are not realised if projects are not brought forward.	Delivery will be supported through the existing £350,000 Local Transport Grant allocation for the Parking and Freight Strategies. Further projects will be progressed through individual business cases and governance processes, ensuring prioritisation and funding alignment.
Financial risk associated with future infrastructure proposals (e.g. multi-storey provision, residents' parking expansion): Costs are currently undefined and may be significant.	No financial commitment is made through this decision. All future schemes will require separate approval and detailed business cases, including full financial appraisal and funding strategy.
Reputational risk relating to enforcement changes: Consultation responses indicate mixed views on enforcement, which may generate public concern.	The strategy establishes clear principles rather than immediate changes. Any operational changes will be subject to consultation, communication and appropriate equality and impact assessment to ensure proportionality and transparency.
Service capacity and delivery risk: There is a risk that the Parking Service does not have sufficient capacity to deliver the ambitions of the strategy.	Delivery will be managed within existing service structures and prioritised through annual business planning. Any significant changes to service delivery will be considered through future decision reports and use of internal resources such as the Project Management Office will mitigate the impact.
Asset management risk (car parks): Transferring maintenance responsibility from Property Services to the Parking Service introduces a risk if funding or management is insufficient.	Parking income will be ringfenced and reinvested into asset maintenance, providing a more sustainable and accountable approach to managing car park infrastructure. Currently there is no dedicated budget for car park maintenance therefore
Risk of not adopting the strategy: Without a clear strategic framework, parking management will remain reactive and inconsistent, with ongoing safety concerns and missed opportunities to support wider transport and economic objectives.	Adoption of the strategy provides a clear, evidence-based framework to guide future decisions and improve consistency and outcomes.

30. The risks identified span a range of categories including financial, operational and reputational risk, and have been considered in line with the council's Performance, Risk and Opportunity Management Framework (PROM).
31. Consideration has been given to both the risks of proceeding with the recommendation and the risks of not adopting the strategy. The adoption of the strategy presents a managed level of risk, primarily associated with future delivery, whereas not adopting the strategy presents a higher strategic risk in terms of continued inconsistent decision-making and unmanaged parking pressures.
32. Subject to approval, the risks associated with delivery of the Parking Strategy will be managed at service level within the Transport Planning and Parking Service, with escalation to directorate-level risk management where appropriate. Relevant risks will be recorded and monitored through the appropriate service risk register.

Consultees

33. A public consultation on the draft Herefordshire Parking Strategy was undertaken between 13 May and 3 June 2026. A total of 471 responses were received through the online survey platform, alongside wider engagement through stakeholders including businesses, town and parish councils and social media channels.
34. The consultation was open to all residents, businesses and stakeholders across the county. Whilst respondents were self-selecting, the volume and breadth of responses provides a robust and representative evidence base of parking issues experienced across Herefordshire. Responses included both quantitative survey data and a significant volume of qualitative feedback, providing detailed insight into user experiences and priorities.
35. The consultation was delivered via an online questionnaire hosted on the council's consultation platform and supported by a communications plan, including promotion through stakeholder networks, targeted emails and social media activity. The consultation included a mix of multiple-choice, ranked and open-text questions to capture both structured responses and detailed feedback.
36. The results of the consultation identified several consistent themes:
 - a. Strong emphasis on safety, with over 80% of respondents identifying it as important or very important
 - b. Widespread concern regarding unsafe and obstructive parking, particularly at junctions, around schools and within residential areas
 - c. Concerns relating to accessibility, including the availability and protection of disabled parking
 - d. General support for improved enforcement, with ANPR enforcement broadly supported in particular when it supports improved safety and congestion reduction.
37. The consultation findings have been directly used to inform the final strategy. In particular:
 - a. The emphasis on safety has been strengthened as a core principle of the strategy
 - b. Proposals to improve enforcement and compliance reflect the issues raised through consultation

- c. The strategy reinforces the protection and prioritisation of disabled users, responding to identified accessibility concerns
 - d. A balanced approach to enforcement has been reflected, recognising differing views from respondents
 - e. Updated delivery plan to deliver the work respondents prioritise
- 38. A political group consultation (PGC) was held on 16th July 2026 where copies of the slides, this report and appendixes were sent prior to the meeting
- 39. Feedback was received within the PGC and via email following the meeting which will continue to support the delivery of the strategies objectives.
- 40. Green Party provided a formal response as below
 - a. Supported the strategy however identified areas of improvement such as
 - i. Move from predict and provide to decide and provide
 - ii. Differentiate Herefford, the market towns and rural areas properly
 - iii. Tie inflation-linked charge rises to reinvest in the alternative not just to maintenance
 - iv. Support EV charging, Renewables and Climate Adaption
 - v. Fund Cyle and e-bike parking as a delivery commitment, not an aspiration
 - vi. Park and choose and Park and Ride
 - vii. Motorbikes
- 41. Members from the Conservative Party spoke about
 - a. Dedicated road safety budget
 - b. Residents' parking schemes and parking in private developments
 - c. Disabled parking and misuse of blue badges
 - d. Motorhome parking
 - e. Improved links with the tourism sector
- 42. Liberal Democrat Councillors spoke on
 - a. Bay sizes within the car parks and on street
 - b. Holistic approach to on and off street parking in market towns
 - c. Pavement parking and vulnerable users
 - d. Weight limits and freight movement
- 43. Members from all political parties identified individual locations where there was parking concerns which have been noted by officers.

44. Where suggestions could not be directly incorporated into the strategy, this is primarily because the document is a strategic framework rather than a delivery plan. Specific requests for local changes, infrastructure or individual schemes will be considered separately through operational processes and future business cases.
45. Feedback will be provided to consultees through the publication of the final consultation report and updates via the council's website and stakeholder channels. This will ensure transparency and demonstrate how responses have informed the final strategy and associated recommendations.

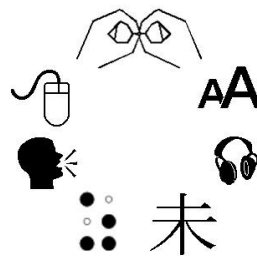
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Parking Strategy

Appendix 2 – Delivery Plan

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

Herefordshire Council Parking Strategy 2026-2041



Appendix 1

[Executive Summary](#)[Forward](#)[Our Strategic Objectives](#)[Aligning to our corporate plan and priorities](#)

1. [Support economic growth and thriving town centres](#)
2. [Provide safe, accessible and inclusive parking](#)
3. [Promote the Positive Parking approach](#)
4. [Integrate parking with sustainable transport choices](#)
5. [Support planned growth and development](#)
6. [Improve safety, security and public confidence](#)
7. [Harness technology and innovation](#)
8. [Manage parking demand effectively](#)
9. [Support climate change objectives and environment](#)
10. [Ensure long-term financial sustainability and governance](#)

Appendix 1

Executive Summary

Parking plays a vital role in supporting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Herefordshire’s residents, businesses and visitors. This Parking Strategy sets out a clear, modern, evidence-led approach for how parking will be planned, managed and improved across the county over the next 15 years.

The strategy responds to several key challenges: rising resident and visitor numbers, new development, shifts in travel behaviour, climate commitments, digital transformation and significant public expectations for safe, fair and accessible parking. It delivers a coherent framework that aligns with the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024–2028, the Local Transport Plan 5 (2025–2041), the Hereford City Masterplan, and emerging strategies such as freight, travel planning and EV infrastructure.

The strategy sets out a new direction for parking in the county that focuses on people, place and prosperity. It adopts a Positive Parking approach, prioritising education, clarity and fairness while maintaining targeted enforcement where safety, accessibility or network reliability is at risk. This ensures parking is not perceived as punitive, but as a supportive and enabling service.

Across its nine thematic chapters, the Strategy establishes how parking will contribute to safer streets, thriving town centres, sustainable growth, accessible communities and a greener future. It recognises the diverse needs of residents, disabled users, businesses, freight operators, visitors, and those choosing to travel actively or sustainably. It also addresses the operational realities of delivering a modern parking service—technology upgrades, digital payments, asset management, transparent governance and reinvestment into maintenance and safety improvements.

Key features of the strategy include:

- **Supporting people and communities** through safer, more inclusive and accessible parking, including enhanced disabled provision and fair, clearly communicated enforcement.
- **Strengthening the local economy** by improving access to town centres, coordinating with the Hereford Transport Hub, supporting tourism, events and freight, and enabling appropriate parking in new developments.
- **Managing growth and change** by future-proofing capacity—including the development of a new multistorey car park—and integrating with the Hereford City Masterplan.
- **Promoting sustainability and climate resilience** by supporting EV charging expansion, protecting active travel routes, discouraging obstructive parking, and integrating parking with public transport and Park & Choose facilities.

Appendix 1

- **Improving safety, maintenance and public confidence** through Park Mark accreditation, better lighting and CCTV, modern equipment, clear standards, and structured performance reporting.
- **Delivering innovation and value for money** through virtual permits, pay-on-exit infrastructure, digital reporting tools, ring-fenced maintenance budgets and data-driven decision making.

Above all, the strategy is designed to be adaptable. As travel patterns change, new technologies emerge and major projects reshape the transport network, this framework ensures Herefordshire's parking system remains safe, functional, financially sustainable and supportive of wider council ambitions. It is a balanced, pragmatic and people-focused strategy that provides a strong foundation for Herefordshire's future mobility.

Appendix 1

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026–2041, a forward-looking and ambitious plan that will help shape how people move around our county for years to come. Parking affects every resident, business and visitor, and it plays a central role in supporting our local economy, protecting our communities, and creating the conditions for safer, more sustainable travel.



This strategy marks a significant step forward. It replaces outdated approaches with a modern, evidence-led framework that reflects the needs of a changing county. As Herefordshire grows—with new homes, new employment sites, increasing visitor numbers and major investment in our transport network—it is essential that parking is managed in a way that is fair, clear and supportive of the wider public interest.

A key theme throughout this strategy is Positive Parking: an approach built on education, clarity and partnership. We want parking to feel supportive rather than punitive, with well-maintained facilities, clear information, and enforcement focused on protecting safety, accessibility and fairness. Delivering this shift will help build confidence in the service and ensure parking plays a positive role in our communities.

The strategy also aligns closely with the Council Plan and the recently adopted Local Transport Plan 2025 - 2041, playing a key role in improving access to essential services, strengthening our town centres, supporting freight and business activity, and integrating parking with walking, cycling, bus and rail travel. It recognises the importance of disabled accessibility, the value of our visitor economy, and the need for digital innovation, improved maintenance and responsible asset management.

Our ambition is clear: a parking system that enables people to live, work, visit and travel safely and confidently—while supporting a thriving economy and a healthier, more resilient environment.

I would like to thank councillors, partners, stakeholders, enforcement officers and community groups who contributed to the development of this strategy. Your insights and local knowledge have helped shape a balanced and practical plan that will guide investment, service improvements and policy decisions over the coming years.

This strategy provides a strong foundation for delivering a modern, fair and future-ready parking service for Herefordshire. I look forward to working with colleagues and the community as we deliver its actions and help create a transport network that works for everyone.

Councillor Barry Durkin

Cabinet Member for Roads and Regulatory Services

Appendix 1

Our Strategic Objectives

The Herefordshire Parking Strategy has been developed to ensure that parking supports the needs of residents, businesses and visitors whilst contributing to the wider ambitions of the Council, the Local Transport Plan 5 and emerging place-based initiatives. Parking is not an end in itself; it is a tool that helps people access jobs, education, healthcare, shopping, leisure opportunities and public transport.

The strategy therefore seeks to balance competing demands for limited road space and parking provision in a way that supports economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and community wellbeing.

The objectives have been informed by local evidence, stakeholder engagement, national best practice and the challenges identified throughout the strategy.

The key objectives of the strategy are to:

1. **Support economic growth and thriving town centres** by ensuring parking enables access to businesses, services, tourism destinations and employment opportunities.
2. **Provide safe, accessible and inclusive parking for all users** with consideration given to disabled people, carers, residents and those with mobility impairments.
3. **Promote the Positive Parking approach** by delivering a parking service based on education, fairness, transparency and community engagement.
4. **Integrate parking with sustainable transport choices** including walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, Park and Ride and Park and Choose facilities.
5. **Support planned growth and development** by ensuring new developments provide appropriate parking and sustainable travel infrastructure that reflects local needs.
6. **Improve safety, security and public confidence** through better design, maintenance, lighting, CCTV, Park Mark accreditation and targeted enforcement.
7. **Harness technology and innovation** to deliver modern payment systems, virtual permits, improved customer services and data-led decision making.
8. **Manage parking demand effectively** to maximise the efficient use of parking spaces, improve turnover where appropriate and reduce congestion and obstruction, improvement to Freight and taxi facilities
9. **Support climate change objectives and environmental improvement** through electric vehicle infrastructure, protection of active travel routes and more sustainable management of parking assets.

Appendix 1

10. **Ensure long-term financial sustainability and good governance** through transparent pricing, reinvestment in maintenance, performance monitoring and effective asset management.

Why These Objectives Matter

Herefordshire faces many challenges and opportunities over the next fifteen years. Population growth, increased tourism, changing travel patterns, digital transformation, climate change commitments and major transport investments such as the Hereford Transport Hub, Hereford Bypass and wider county regeneration will all influence parking demand and how people travel. At the same time, residents rightly expect parking services to be fair, accessible, easy to understand and responsive to local needs. The strategy's objectives provide a framework for responding to these changes while ensuring parking remains a positive contributor to the county's future.

The county is expected to accommodate approximately 27,260 additional homes and a corresponding increase in employment opportunities by 2041 to meet national government targets. This level of growth will place greater pressure on travel demand and parking, particularly around key destinations such as employment centres, transport interchanges, healthcare facilities, and town centres

This is further compounded by government targets requiring 55% of transport in towns and cities to be delivered through active and integrated modes by 2035, alongside a goal for 60% of children to walk, wheel, or cycle to school by the same year. Achieving these targets presents a significant challenge in a predominantly rural county such as Herefordshire.

The Local Transport Plan 5 adopted in 2025 laid the foundation for all our transport strategies and this parking strategy ensures we are aligned to the Council's objectives and priorities. This included the focus on providing travel choice in the county so however people want to travel they have the facilities and ability to do so.

Parking has a direct impact on road safety, accessibility, economic performance and the quality of public spaces. Poorly managed parking can create congestion, obstruct footways and cycle routes, reduce access for disabled users and undermine town centre vitality. Conversely, well-planned and well-managed parking can improve accessibility, support businesses, strengthen tourism, encourage sustainable travel and help create attractive and vibrant places.

How We Will Deliver These Objectives

Delivery of these objectives will be achieved through a combination of investment, partnership working, ongoing monitoring and ensuring supporting policy is responsive and fit for purpose. The strategy sets out priorities across a range of themes including growth and development, accessibility, enforcement, visitor parking, freight, safety, technology and sustainable travel integration. Key interventions include the introduction of virtual permits, expansion of EV charging infrastructure, development of Park and

Appendix 1

Choose facilities, improved disabled parking provision, implementation of Park Mark standards, modernisation of payment systems and the introduction of a Positive Parking approach focused on education and compliance.

The Council will work closely with residents, businesses, disability groups, transport operators, developers, parish councils and other stakeholders to ensure that parking policies remain responsive to local needs. Performance will be monitored through key performance indicators, annual reporting and regular reviews of parking provision, enforcement activity and customer feedback. This will ensure the strategy remains adaptable and capable of responding to emerging challenges and opportunities throughout the period to 2041.

Ultimately, the strategy seeks to create a modern, fair and future-ready parking system that supports people, places and prosperity; one that enables economic growth, enhances accessibility, supports sustainable travel and improves the quality of life for communities across Herefordshire.

Aligning to the Local Transport Plan 5

Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) (2025 – 2041)

The new parking strategy is a core supporting document to LTP5, which sets out the long-term vision for transport across the county. Its objectives include:

- Supporting a thriving and prosperous economy
- Enabling healthy behaviours and improving wellbeing
- Tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing natural and built environments
- Improving accessibility and inclusivity
- Improving transport safety and perceptions of security

The strategy aligns with and directly supports these objectives by:

Supporting a thriving and prosperous economy

- Ensuring parking capacity and turnover are managed in a way that supports local businesses and town centre vitality.
- Providing appropriate access for freight, taxis and deliveries to support commercial activity.

Enabling healthy behaviours and improving wellbeing

- Reducing illegal and obstructive parking on pavements, cycle lanes and bus routes.
- Supporting active travel modes by ensuring safe infrastructure, improved crossings and better footway access.

Tackling climate change and enhancing the environment

- Integrating EV charging networks across council-operated car parks.
- Supporting climate resilient parking infrastructure and reducing land impacts through smarter management.

Improving accessibility and inclusivity

- Enhancing disabled parking standards.
- Review existing and proposed bay locations.
- Prioritise step-free access at identified locations during the design phase of new bay locations
- Ensuring residents, carers and Blue Badge holders can park close to essential services.

Improving transport safety and security

Appendix 1

- Enhancing lighting, CCTV, design standards, enforcement approaches and Park Mark accreditation across the estate.

Why a new parking strategy?

The Local Transport Plan 5 commits to the creation of a new car parking strategy for Herefordshire, stating that it will “better manage parking demand, including providing more on-street parking.” This reflects the need for a modern, responsive and evidence-led approach to parking management across the county.

A new parking strategy is needed because:

- The existing parking strategy is outdated and no longer reflects the Local Transport Plan, the Council Plan or current transport priorities.
- There is a growing need to integrate parking with wider strategies on climate change, public health, sustainable travel and placemaking.
- Population growth, new developments and increased tourism require a clear, consistent and futureproofed approach to parking provision and management.
- Technological advances, behaviour change and national best practice call for modernised payment systems, enforcement tools, and operational models.
- A new strategy ensures parking supports, rather than hinders, the council's ambitions for economic vitality, environmental protection, and community wellbeing.

Appendix 1

1. Support economic growth and thriving town centres

The Parking Strategy plays a central role in supporting Herefordshire's economy by improving access to shops, services and employment, strengthening the performance of town centres, and making it easier for visitors and residents to move around the county. Improved loading arrangements, clearer wayfinding and reliable access to parking all help to create vibrant commercial areas and attract more people into our towns.

Integrating parking with the new Hereford Transport Hub

Herefordshire Council is delivering a major transformation project through the creation of a new integrated Transport Hub next to Hereford Railway Station. The Hub will bring together bus, rail, walking and cycling facilities, creating a modern gateway for visitors, commuters and local residents.

The Hub will provide:

- An enclosed waiting room
- A redesigned bus interchange
- Covered cycle storage and improved pedestrian/cycle access
- Realtime information boards and accessible public realm
- A restructured short stay/accessible parking and taxi area

These improvements are designed to tie together public transport, local heritage, and active travel, while creating a welcoming public space that supports the local economy.

As the main arrival point for the city, the Transport Hub will be supported by a parking strategy that ensures visitors can find parking easily, move confidently between modes of travel, and navigate the city centre through clearer, tourism-friendly wayfinding.

Linking to the Hereford City Masterplan

The emerging Hereford City Masterplan provides a long-term blueprint for how the city will evolve over the next generation. It sets out a vision for a greener, healthier and safer city with better movement choices, improved public spaces and enhanced connections between key destinations.

Key themes include:

- Improving the public realm to support local businesses and city centre footfall
- Creating a more coherent and attractive arrival experience for visitors.
- Reducing congestion and short car trips.
- Repurposing some existing car parks over time as development opportunities arise
- Creating a more coherent, attractive arrival experience for visitors

Appendix 1

- Providing better options for walking, cycling and public transport – linking to the Local Transport Plan and Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan

The Parking Strategy must work hand-in-hand with the Masterplan by ensuring that parking provision is:

- Located where it best supports business activity
- Designed to complement public realm improvements
- Integrated with new movement routes and active travel corridors
- Capable of adapting over time as travel patterns change

The Masterplan explicitly notes that Herefords available parking facilities are not all location where they are needed meaning they do not match the demand . This reinforces the need for a flexible, future focused parking strategy that supports economic vitality.

As the Masterplan is adopted and implemented it is recognised the Parking Strategy may need to be updated to ensure its continuing alignment.

Planning for a new multistorey car park in Hereford

Herefordshire Council is progressing plans for a new multistorey car park in the city as part of wider transport changes. The multistorey is intended to:

- Replace parking capacity expected to be lost as parts of Merton Meadows are redeveloped
- Support hospital staff, patients and visitors by providing dedicated spaces
- Strengthen access to the railway station, Transport Hub and city centre
- Improve parking availability for commuters and contractors

This major infrastructure investment will ensure that Hereford retains appropriate parking capacity during redevelopment phases, supports economic resilience, and provides a reliable supply of spaces for workers, visitors and businesses.

Creating tourism friendly movement and wayfinding

As part of both the Transport Hub programme and the Hereford Masterplan, improved wayfinding, clearer signage and more intuitive walking and cycling routes will help visitors navigate the city more easily. The Parking Strategy will support this by:

- Standardising parking signage across the county
- Improving digital maps and information for visitors
- Ensuring parking routes connect directly to key attractions and economic centres
- Making it easier for visitors to find coach parking, overnight parking, and multiday stay options

Appendix 1

These improvements will help strengthen the tourism offer across the city and wider county, making it easier for people to stay longer and spend more in local shops, hospitality and cultural venues.

Supporting tourism and the visitor economy

Tourism is a major part of our local economy, and we want to make it easier for people to visit, stay longer and enjoy everything the area has to offer. To support this, we will introduce multiday parking tickets so visitors can park for 48 hours, 72 hours or even a full week without needing to return to their vehicle every day. This will make longer stays simpler and reduce unnecessary vehicle movements.

We will also work closely with hotels, B&Bs and holiday providers to create joined up parking options for guests. This may include discounted parking, digital passes that can be arranged as part of a booking, or dedicated visitor permits. By partnering with the tourism sector, we can help ensure that parking supports local businesses and improves the overall visitor experience.

Coach parking and group travel

Coaches bring thousands of visitors to the area each year, and we want to make sure they can arrive and depart safely and efficiently.

As part of this strategy, we will identify and map all existing coach parking facilities, review their suitability, and improve signage so operators can easily find them.

We will also create or improve dedicated coach drop off and pickup points in key town centre locations, allowing passengers to access shops, attractions and events without causing congestion.

Longer stay coach parking will be directed to satellite sites where space is more suitable. In line with our wider transport plans, we will support the ambition to increase the number of accredited coach stops in the region, making the area more attractive to tour operators.

A clear and consistent overnight parking policy

At present, overnight parking rules vary between different car parks, which can be confusing for visitors. We will introduce a single, consistent overnight parking policy across all council managed car parks.

This will involve reviewing every site to decide where overnight stays should be allowed, where they should be restricted, and what facilities are needed to support them.

We will provide clear information through signage, online maps and digital parking apps so visitors know exactly where they can stay overnight and what the rules are.

Appendix 1

Managing overnight stays by motorhomes and campervans The rise of campervans and motorhomes brings new opportunities and challenges. These visitors contribute to the local economy and we want to encourage them to come and enjoy the beauty of our county, but unmanaged overnight stays can lead to waste issues, noise, or damage to sensitive natural areas.

To manage this responsibly, we will create designated locations for managing overnight stays by motorhomes and campervans, chosen carefully to avoid residential areas and protect the environment.

These designated sites will include appropriate facilities such as:

- Waste disposal points for grey water and chemical toilet waste
- Fresh water refill stations
- Clear signage and guidance on responsible behaviour
- Charging points where feasible, including future EV ready bays
- Appropriate-sized bays to make attractive and usable facilities
- Fair, transparent charges to cover maintenance and environmental protection

By providing proper facilities, we can support responsible travel while reducing the impact on local communities and landscapes.

We recognise that not all motorhomes and campervans require overnight rest facilities; therefore we will review our car parks and provide larger bay sizes near the city and town centres to accommodate day tourism in larger vehicles.

Alongside this, we will strengthen enforcement in areas where overnight stays are not permitted, using clear communication and proportionate action to prevent environmental harm.

We will work with communities to identify areas where we need to provide facilities. Where problem areas are identified, we will focus on management and enforcement.

Parking for events and temporary needs

Large events and unexpected situations can put extra pressure on Herefordshire's road network and parking supply. To manage these additional pressures on the public highway network, we will establish clearer processes for how temporary parking is planned, approved and delivered.

Temporary event parking

For concerts, festivals, fairs, sporting fixtures and other large gatherings, the Council will:

- Work with event organisers to identify suitable temporary parking areas that do not create traffic or safety issues.

Appendix 1

- Encourage the use of Park and Ride, Park and Choose, walking and cycling, and work with bus operators to put on additional services where needed.
- Require clear plans for signage, stewarding, traffic management and post event site restoration, ensuring local communities are not negatively affected.
- Make sure temporary parking is used only where absolutely necessary and that sustainable options are always prioritised.

2. Provide safe, accessible and inclusive parking for all users

Herefordshire Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and visitors, including people with mobility impairments or hidden impairments - can access parking safely and conveniently. The following section sets out how our parking strategy will support disabled users, including legal duties, bay design requirements, kerb heights, and how we will learn from best practice across the UK and our responsibilities under the Equality Act.

Blue Badge Scheme

The Department for Transport sets the national framework for the Blue Badge Scheme, further details can be found [here](#). This is not something that Herefordshire Council administer or any have influence over.

All users of disabled bays will be required to display a valid Blue Badge used in accordance with the rules of the scheme contained in the Blue Badge Handbook. If a badge is displayed incorrectly, or not at all, a PCN will be issued. If there is evidence of misuse of the badge it will be confiscated and returned to the blue badge service.

Designing disabled parking bays

Bay dimensions

Disabled bays must be larger than standard parking spaces to ensure users have enough space for wheelchairs, mobility aids, and vehicle ramps. Herefordshire Council commit to meet the national guidance and, where possible, exceed this with larger bays:

- On street parallel bay size: Minimum 6.6m long and 2.7m wide
- On-street echelon bay size: Minimum 3.6 wide and 5m long
- Off-street bay size: Minimum 2.4m width + a 1.2m access zone around the bay.

We commit to this as this helps ensure users can get in and out of vehicles safely and comfortably.

Marking and signage

The Council also aspire that all accessible bays should be:

- Clearly marked with the wheelchair symbol or the word "DISABLED"
- Supported by upright signage at driver eye level
- Well-lit where possible to ensure visibility
- Compliant with regulations or best practice

Kerb heights, dropped kerbs and level access

Appendix 1

Ensuring safe movement between parking bays and nearby footways is essential. The Council commits to:

- Dropped kerbs with tactile paving must be provided where disabled users need to cross a road or transition from parking to footway.
- Kerb heights should ensure level or near level access, helping wheelchair users, people with walking aids, or those with limited strength.
- Footways leading from disabled bays should be smooth, well maintained, and unobstructed.

We will prioritise improvements to kerb gradients and crossing points in areas where disabled parking is provided. Where kerb heights do not or cannot meet the above standard, a disabled bay will be placed elsewhere.

How many disabled bays should be provided?

Different types of sites require different levels of accessible parking provision.

- **Employment sites:** At least 5% of parking spaces should be accessible, plus additional dedicated bays for disabled employees who need them.
- **Shopping, leisure and recreational sites:** A minimum of 6% of total spaces should be accessible.
- **General council managed car parks:** Government guidance (Inclusive Mobility) suggests allocating 6% of spaces where possible.

We will review our car parks to ensure where possible, we meet or exceed these standards. Through the Travel Plan policy we will ensure where possible, all new sites also meet the minimum stated above.

Monitoring and preventing misuse of disabled parking bays

Making sure disabled parking bays remain available for those who genuinely need them is essential for ensuring fairness and accessibility. Herefordshire Council will introduce a clear and transparent monitoring framework that includes:

Regular enforcement

We will ensure that disabled bays—whether on street or in council managed car parks—are reserved strictly for Blue Badge holders. This will include:

- Regular patrols by Civil Enforcement Officers
- Issuing Penalty Charge Notices where misuse occurs
- Clear and consistent signage so drivers understand the rules

This reflects common best practice used by other UK councils, where visible enforcement and clear communication help maintain confidence in the system.

Ongoing monitoring of usage levels

Appendix 1

We will actively monitor how disabled bays are used across our towns and parishes.

Our approach will include:

- Tracking occupancy at different times of day
- Identifying locations where bays are frequently full or rarely used
- Reviewing misuse reports from residents, Blue Badge holders and disability groups

This will help us understand where additional bays may be required or where bays should be redesigned for better access and allow us to target enforcement where blue badges are being misused or spaces used by those not eligible.

Adjusting bay numbers and layouts based on need

Where monitoring shows that current provision is not meeting demand we will update bay numbers, sizes or locations. Inclusive design guidance emphasises that accessible parking should respond to users' needs, including the proximity to entrances, kerb layouts and safe, level access routes.

This evidence led approach will ensure that our parking provision stays responsive, fair and inclusive.

Our commitment to continuous improvement

Herefordshire Council recognises that accessibility is not a one off task; it requires ongoing effort, updates and collaboration. Guided by national inclusive design standards and good practice from other authorities, we will:

- Review disabled parking provision across the County
- Upgrade kerbs and footways where accessibility barriers exist
- Work with disability groups to identify local priorities
- Local knowledge from Blue Badge holders, disability groups and access forums is vital. We will engage regularly with these groups to understand: Barriers to access, locations where additional bays or infrastructure improvements are needed, emerging mobility needs
- Ensure all new transport or regeneration projects include inclusive parking from the start; this ensures accessibility is built in—never added on later.
- Regularly evaluate whether the number, quality and location of disabled bays meets demand

This commitment ensures our disabled parking provision remains fit for purpose, responsive to community needs, and aligned with best practice.

Blue badge fraud and misuse

It is a criminal offence to misuse a Blue Badge, and doing so can lead to a £1,000 fine.

Appendix 1

If the badge holder is using the parking concessions as a passenger (as opposed to driving the car themselves), it is their responsibility to make sure that the driver is aware of the rules governing the scheme.

We take Blue Badge misuse very seriously and enforcement officers carry out regular checks to ensure badges are being used legally.

Where a Blue Badge is found to be misused, the badge will be seized and an investigation will be carried out including an interview by post under caution.

Many cases have resulted in the driver being prosecuted. As well as risking a fine, the driver also receives a criminal record.

Reporting misuse of a Blue Badge

If you think someone is using a Blue Badge that does not belong to them, please let us know. You can call us on 01432 260974 or email civilparkingenforcement@herefordshire.gov.uk

Please give as much information as possible. We do accept anonymous reports but if you wish to leave your details, these will remain confidential.

Tackling Blue Badge misuse to protect those who need support

We talk about the approach to how we support disabled users earlier on in the strategy however unfortunately there are people who don't adhere to the restrictions in place for disabled users meaning unfortunately we need to also enforce these restrictions. Blue Badge spaces exist for one simple reason: to help disabled people park closer to the places they need to go. When someone misuses a Blue Badge — whether by using one that doesn't belong to them, using an expired badge, or parking in a disabled bay without a valid badge — it takes a vital space away from someone who genuinely needs it.

We know how important these spaces are for independence, dignity and day to day life, so we will take a firm but fair approach to tackling Blue Badge misuse.

Why this matters

Misuse doesn't just break the rules — it can stop a disabled person from:

- getting to a medical appointment
- accessing shops or services
- travelling independently
- feeling safe and supported in their community

Protecting these spaces is a key part of creating an inclusive, accessible county.

Appendix 1

How we will enforce Blue Badge rules

- We will continue to enforce Blue Badge legislation in line with national law. This includes:
 - Targeted checks in areas where misuse is regularly reported
 - Working with the police where fraud or deliberate misuse is suspected
 - Clear communication so people understand the rules and the consequences of breaking them

Our goal is not to penalise genuine mistakes — it is to stop the small number of people who make life harder for others by misusing a Blue Badge.

How the public can help

We want residents to feel confident reporting concerns about Blue Badge misuse. Public reports help us understand where problems are happening and allow us to target our enforcement where it will have the biggest impact.

By working together, we can protect disabled parking spaces, support those who rely on them, and send a clear message: Blue Badge misuse will not be tolerated.

Pavement Parking

In 2026 the government announced they will be giving councils the powers to enforce Pavement Parking which previously has been only enforceable by the police. When the Local Transport Plan 2025 was consulted on many residents and visitors raised the issue of illegal parking on a pavement. The Council recognise this problem that our residents face daily. It causes safety concerns and damages the pavement increasing safety risks and maintenance costs. The Council will be working with the public on how best to roll out these powers.

Updates to this section will be made as guidance and information from government is available.

Renting out private driveways and garages

The Council is aware that more people are choosing to rent out their driveway or garage as a parking space, while this isn't something the council will normally be involved in, this policy gives some guidance to those wanting to explore this option. It is important to note that residents cannot rent out the public highway and can only do this on their land.

In most cases, homeowners don't need planning permission to rent out a single parking space, if it's just for one vehicle and isn't causing problems for neighbours. This follows national guidance that says renting out one space usually doesn't count as a change of use.

Appendix 1

The Government has also made it clear that a homeowner can rent out their driveway without planning permission so long as it doesn't create nuisance or breach any conditions already attached to the property.

There are a few situations where planning permission *might* be needed:

- If someone starts renting out multiple spaces or the activity starts to look more like a commercial car park.
- If the number of cars coming and going begins to noticeably affect neighbours and increases demand on the highway network.
- If the homeowner needs to build or change the driveway—for example, adding new surfacing or creating a dropped kerb. These types of changes can fall under normal planning rules for driveways.

Residents should also remember:

- Any income earned may need to be declared for tax purposes.
- Spaces in permit controlled areas usually can't be rented out.

Herefordshire Council supports the responsible renting of private driveways and garages where it helps reduce demand for on street parking. The council will not intervene unless there are clear planning, neighbour impact, or highway safety issues.

Residents' Parking zones (RPZ) and permits

Introducing a RPZ is a formal legal process. We must follow national regulations when creating parking restrictions, including producing a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This is a legal document required under the Traffic Management Act 2004.

There are currently several Residents' Parking zones around the county; these are listed on the Council's [website](#).

How residents can ask for a new residents' parking zone

We know that parking pressures can have a real impact on daily life—especially in areas where commuters, shoppers or visitors make it difficult for residents to park near their homes. If you believe your street or neighbourhood would benefit from an RPZ, before you contact the council residents are asked to -

- Speak with your neighbours to gather support.
- Document the parking issues you experience.
- Submit your request to Herefordshire Council, including evidence of local support.

We're here to help guide you through the process and make sure your concerns are carefully considered.

All zones will have to be compliant with the council's terms and conditions found [here](#).

Appendix 1

Emergency and contingency car parks

In rare situations—such as major incidents, road closures or infrastructure problems—the Council may need to activate temporary or emergency parking areas.

We will:

- Maintain a list of pre-identified contingency sites that can be opened quickly when needed.
- Ensure these sites are safe and have clear access and exit arrangements.
- Coordinate with emergency services, local partners and affected communities to minimise disruption.

Disaster response

During flooding, severe weather, or other significant events like pandemics where people may need to relocate or emergency workers require guaranteed access, or we need to change the use of a car park. To respond temporary parking may form part of the wider response.

The Council will:

- Use temporary parking areas to support evacuation centres, emergency logistics, and volunteer coordination hubs.
- Prioritise parking for emergency vehicles, essential workers and displaced residents when needed.
- Ensure any use of land for emergency parking is brief, safe and well communicated.

Volunteer support during natural events.

During severe weather and other natural events, the Council recognises the vital role that volunteers play in helping their communities. To make their work easier—and to acknowledge the contribution they make—we will look to provide temporary parking permits for verified volunteers. These permits will give them easier access to the areas where they are needed most, helping them carry out their support safely and efficiently. This approach also shows our appreciation for the time and effort volunteers give during challenging periods.

3. Promote the Positive Parking approach

What is the Positive Parking initiative?

This strategy includes a clear introduction and tailored approach for Hereford City and each of the county's Market Towns, recognising that parking needs, pressures and opportunities vary significantly across Herefordshire.

Hereford City plays a distinct role as the county's main centre for employment, retail, education and services, with higher parking demand, more complex movement patterns and greater pressure on space.

In contrast, the Market Towns serve as vital local centres for surrounding rural communities, where parking supports access to shops, services, tourism and everyday life but must be carefully balanced with historic street layouts and local character.

By addressing Hereford City and the Market Towns individually, the strategy ensures that parking policies are proportionate, locally appropriate and responsive to the specific role each place plays, while maintaining a consistent, countywide framework.

The Positive Parking initiative is a new approach to parking that focuses on helping people, not catching people out.

We want our resident and businesses to instead of seeing parking enforcement as something negative or punitive, Positive Parking is a way of creating a fair and easy to understand parking system.

It aims to improve safety, make parking more accessible for everyone, reduce confusion, and build trust between the council and the community.

Officers will focus on education first, provide clear information, encourage considerate parking, and use enforcement only when necessary to keep streets safe and accessible.

Why adopt the positive parking approach?

We know that parking can be a source of frustration - whether it's finding a space, dealing with obstructive parking, or understanding restrictions.

At the same time, poorly parked vehicles can make streets unsafe, block pavements, damage public spaces, cause congestion and affect access for disabled people, emergency services and buses.

We want to focus on the positives of parking and support and focus on the majority of the community; not the minority who park unsafely and inconsiderately.

The Positive Parking initiative helps us:

- Keep streets safer and easier to use.

Appendix 1

- Improve access for people who need it most.
- Support local shops, cafes and businesses
- Reduce confusion by providing clearer information.
- Build a parking service people trust and feel confident using.

It moves parking away from being seen as “just enforcement” and towards a service that supports healthier, more welcoming communities.

What does this means for you

A friendlier, more helpful Parking Service

Our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) will be more visible and approachable. Their role isn't just to issue tickets—they are trained to:

- Help with information and guidance.
- Explain rules clearly.
- Support safe and accessible streets.
- Act as a friendly point of contact.
- Support safeguarding
- Proactively report highway defects and environmental issues

Clearer signs, markings and information

We will make parking easier to understand by improving:

- Signage and road markings
- Online maps and parking guidance
- Payment information so it is clear and easy to understand.
- Explanations of why certain restrictions are needed (e.g., safety, accessibility, emergency access)

Safer streets and better access

The initiative will help prevent:

- Pavement and dropped kerb blocking
- Parking in bus stops and cycle lanes
- Dangerous parking at junctions and school gates
- Obstructions that make life harder for wheelchair users, people with pushchairs and older residents

Keeping our streets safe and accessible benefits everyone.

Supporting local shops and town centres

A positive approach to parking means:

Appendix 1

- Turning parking spaces over more regularly
- Making it easier for people to visit shops and markets
- Providing clearer information for visitors and tourists
- Managing loading and delivery better so businesses can thrive

We want town centres to feel welcoming, convenient and easy to get around.

Using modern technology to make parking easier

We will continue modernising our systems, including:

- More digital payment options like pay on exit
- Virtual permits you don't need to display in your car
- Easier ways to report problems like broken machines or damaged signs
- Better use of data to make improvements and plan for the future

These changes will reduce hassle and help us respond more quickly to any issues.

How it will work in practice

Here is what you can expect to see as the Positive Parking Initiative rolls out:

- More help from officers out on the street
- Educational campaigns explaining why certain rules exist
- Targeted enforcement in areas where safety is a concern (such as schools, crossings and disabled bays)
- Better communication with communities, disability groups and businesses
- Regular reviews to make sure parking stays fair, accessible and easy to understand

We'll also publish information each year on how the parking service is performing, what we've improved and what we're planning next.

The benefits for everyone

For residents

- Safer, clearer and more accessible streets
- Better protection for disabled users and vulnerable pedestrians
- A fair and supportive approach to parking issues

For businesses

- Easier access for customers
- Better managed loading and delivery
- A more welcoming town center environment

For visitors

Appendix 1

- Clearer signage and simpler payments
- A more positive impression of Herefordshire
- Improved access to attractions and events

For the county

- Streets that are safer and more pleasant
- Reduced congestion and obstruction
- Stronger trust between the public and the council

The Positive Parking Initiative is about working with you, not against you. It means:

- Fairness, not frustration
- Support, not just enforcement
- Clear information, not confusion
- Safer, more accessible streets for all

Parking plays a big part in how our communities feel and function. With this initiative, we're taking a big step towards making parking in Herefordshire easier, friendlier and more positive for everyone.

4. Integrate parking with sustainable transport choices

Parking doesn't exist in isolation — it plays a key role in how people choose to travel. The key mantra of the Local Transport Plan is to support Travel Choice for anyone living, working or visiting our county. By designing parking systems that link smoothly with buses, trains, cycling, walking and shared transport, we can make it easier for people to choose cleaner, healthier and more sustainable ways of getting around.

Better cycle and motorcycle parking

As more people choose to travel by bike, e-bike, cargo bike or motorcycle, we want to make sure they have safe, convenient and secure places to park. These vehicles can be expensive, and owners need confidence that their property is protected when they leave it.

To support this, we will expand and improve parking for cycles and motorcycles by:

- Identifying the right locations for cycle parking in town centres, residential areas and transport hubs
- Exploring secure bike lockers and other high quality storage options that offer added protection
- Delivering secure parking for a wide range of cycles, including cargo bikes, adapted cycles and ebikes
- Introducing app based payment for motorcycle parking, creating a fair and modern system
- Developing premium, chargeable secure bike parking, recognising that many modern bikes and e bikes are high value items and that owners want safe, reliable facilities

Providing high quality, secure options helps people feel confident choosing active travel, knowing their bike or motorcycle will be safe while they work, shop or travel onward.

This approach supports sustainability, encourages healthier travel choices and ensures our parking offer reflects the needs of modern riders.

Expanding cycle and e-bike sharing

We want to make it easier for people to choose cycling for short trips. As set out in LTP5, we will:

- expand bike and cycle sharing schemes, including e-bikes and e-cargo bikes
- ensure shared bikes are available at key destinations such as stations, town centres and Park & Choose sites

Appendix 1

This gives people more flexible, low carbon travel options without needing to own a bike.

Better links between parking, rail and bus services

Parking should support public transport, not compete with it. We will improve the way parking connects with rail and bus services by:

- working closely with the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)
- aligning with the emerging rail strategy
- supporting improvements to station facilities, as referenced in LTP5
- ensuring car parks and cycle parking are located where they make onward travel simple and convenient

This will help create seamless journeys and encourage more people to use public transport.

Closing cycle lane TRO gaps

All cycle lanes currently will have a legal Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) needed to prevent vehicles from parking in them. This creates confusion and reduces safety for cyclists.

We will:

- identify and close TRO gaps
- ensure cycle lanes are properly protected
- make it clear where parking is and isn't allowed

This will help create safer, more reliable cycling routes across the county.

E-Scooters: Preparing for future travel options

E-scooters remain part of a national trial, so we cannot guarantee when or if they will come to Herefordshire. However, we want to be ready if they do. That means planning for:

- safe and appropriate storage and parking areas
- integration with wider active travel routes
- clear rules to ensure they are used responsibly

Preparing now means we can introduce them smoothly if national legislation changes.

Park and Choose / Park and Cycle

Park and Choose sites are places where people can leave their car and continue their journey by healthier or more sustainable means. At the moment, these sites mainly support the bike hire scheme, but we want them to offer much more. As this policy evolves, Park and Choose sites will become flexible community mobility hubs, offering

Appendix 1

walking and cycling connections, carshare options, and links to public transport—all designed to make it easier for people to have a choice in how they travel.

As Hereford grows, we'll look to include new Park and Choose sites within major developments; while also promoting the existing sites across the city. This will help new communities access sustainable travel from day one and reduce the amount of unnecessary traffic entering the city and give more choice to the public. These sites will be planned into new developments where they can be most effective—close to good walking and cycling routes, existing bus services, and key desire lines into the city.

Beyond the city itself, we'll explore opportunities to expand Park and Choose sites across the wider county, especially in places where new housing or employment development creates extra demand for travel. By placing these sites in the right locations, we can help manage future traffic growth, improve local travel choices, and reduce pressure on the main roads into towns and the City.

Where appropriate, we'll also look at adding mobility hub features to some sites and car parks, turning them into well used community spaces. This could include things like parcel and delivery lockers for national and local businesses, giving people convenient options for collections while helping cut down on last mile delivery traffic.

5. Support planned growth and development

The Strategy identifies the management of parking in new developments as a key objective because it is fundamental to shaping how people travel and how places function as growth occurs. Without a clear approach, new housing and employment sites risk embedding car dependency without adequate parking, increasing congestion, and placing additional pressure on existing town centres and transport networks. By prioritising appropriate parking provision alongside sustainable travel choices, the strategy supports the delivery of growth that is accessible, economically viable, and environmentally responsible. This approach helps ensure that new development contributes positively to the wider transport system, supports the vitality of local centres, and aligns with long-term objectives around climate, health, and place-making, rather than creating patterns of travel that are costly and difficult to reverse in the future.

Parking in new builds and developments

We will be updating design guidance for new developments to ensure places are designed to provide sufficient parking spaces for residents and visitors and making sure through new restrictions that new development roads are not full of obstructive vehicles creating safety risks.

Developers will be required to implement sustainable travel modes such as walking, bike and bus facilities plus add Park and Choose facilities in the larger sites.

This section will be developed as the design guidance is completed and adopted

Travel Plans

A new Travel Plan Strategy is currently being developed for adoption in 2026, and this parking strategy will align closely with it. Travel plans will set out how businesses, schools, developers and major employers can support sustainable travel choices through measures such as active travel facilities, public transport incentives, shared mobility options and smarter parking management.

Parking policy will support this work by:

- ensuring that parking provision complements the aims of workplace, school and residential travel plans.
- integrating cycle, motorcycle and EV parking standards into future travel plan requirements
- supporting behaviour change through pricing, design and digital tools

Appendix 1

- ensuring new developments deliver parking and travel infrastructure that encourages sustainable choices
- coordinating with travel plans to manage demand, reduce congestion and improve accessibility

This connection ensures that parking is not treated in isolation but forms part of a wider, coordinated approach to how people travel across Herefordshire.

Assessing matters relating to offers, selling, and buying of council car parks

Offers of new temporary car park sites

Landowners sometimes offer fields, hard standing or other land for use during events or emergencies. To handle these efficiently, the Council will develop a simple assessment process to check:

- Suitability for safe entry, exit and vehicle circulation
- Impact on local traffic and nearby communities
- Environmental and drainage considerations
- Any need for temporary permissions or agreements
- Whether the site genuinely supports sustainable management of demand

Sales and acquisitions of car parks

Managing our parking assets well is essential for making sure they deliver value for money, support the wider transport network, and meet the needs of local communities.

To do this, the Council will conduct regular asset review analyses, looking at how each car park performs financially and how it contributes to the wider transport system.

Where the costs outweigh the income and it is not in the community interest to keep funding its maintenance, we will explore commercial optimisation which means we look at ways to raise revenue or reduce operating costs on the council.

Alongside this, we will follow national expectations around responsible asset management. Government guidance stresses that public bodies should only sell assets where they no longer serve a clear public purpose and where a sale represents value for money and supports long term public benefit; there are laws, guidance and principles for the council to work with in this situation and these will guide all decisions involving car parks and related land.

When someone wants to buy one of our car parks

Occasionally, private buyers or organisations may approach the Council about purchasing a car park. When this happens, we will:

Appendix 1

- Review the site's current and future value to the transport network.
- Compare its financial performance with what a sale could achieve, ensuring best consideration is properly assessed using independent valuation or market evidence.
- Consider any wider social, economic or environmental benefits linked to keeping the site in public ownership.
- Check whether the car park serves an essential role during events, emergencies or as part of future public transport plans.

Only where a site is genuinely surplus to requirements—and a sale offers value for money—will the Council consider disposal.

When someone wants to buy public highway that includes council parking

Where requests involve purchasing land that forms part of the public highway, including on street or off street council parking spaces, the process is more complex. Highway land carries additional public responsibilities, and any disposal must consider:

- Highway safety
- The impact on parking supply
- Legal duties under highway and planning law
- Whether any part of the land performs a wider community or transport function

In some cases, authorities may need to consider powers such as compulsory purchase or formal stopping up orders to alter the status of highway land. National guidance highlights that compulsory purchase powers must only be used where there is a clear public interest, backed by engagement and justification.

When someone wants the Council to buy a new car park

Sometimes private landowners, developers or organisations may offer land for a potential new car park. To evaluate these proposals, the Council will:

- Assess the site's location, transport value and alignment with local parking demand
- Check whether the site supports strategic needs—such as development growth, event resilience, or sustainable travel
- Review financial implications, including long term maintenance, revenue potential and operational viability
- Apply value for money principles consistent with Government asset management guidance

We will only acquire new carpark sites where they clearly support the wider parking strategy, provide a benefit to the community and do not add unnecessary long term costs.

Appendix 1

When someone wants the Council to operate their car park

Landowners and organisations sometimes ask the Council to operate their parking areas on their behalf. Where this is proposed, we will look at:

- Whether operating the site supports wider transport goals—e.g., reducing congestion, supporting local centres, or enabling Park & Choose or mobility hub services
- Whether the arrangement is financially sustainable
- The level of control the Council would need to guarantee consistent management standards
- How the site integrates with existing public parking provision

If a partnership model delivers benefits for both the community and the Council, we will explore appropriate agreements.

6. Improve safety, security and public confidence

Our approach to enforcement is built on the principles of the Positive Parking Policy: being fair, consistent, transparent and focused on supporting communities. Enforcement is not about issuing more penalties — it is about keeping streets safe, accessible and functioning for everyone by maximising compliance. To do this well, we need the public to tell us where problems occur so we can target our efforts where they will make the biggest difference.

We want residents, businesses and visitors to feel confident coming to us with concerns about unsafe or inconsiderate parking. Whether it's a blocked dropped kerb, repeated issues outside a school, or problems in a residents' zone, public reports will help shape our enforcement priorities. By working together, we can ensure that enforcement is directed at the behaviours that genuinely impact people's daily lives.

We will make council managed parking facilities safe, secure and welcoming for everyone. This means delivering visible improvements that reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, protect users and staff, and build public confidence through clear standards, consistent delivery and transparent monitoring.

Park Mark

We will pursue Park Mark accreditation for all council managed car parks where it is appropriate. Park Mark is a nationally recognised, police supported award that shows a car park has been independently assessed and found to meet clear standards for safety, security and management. Our aim is to make car parks safer, reduce vehicle crime, and give residents and visitors greater confidence when they park.

What Park Mark Is

Park Mark is part of the Safer Parking Scheme and is awarded after an independent assessment by police approved inspectors. The assessment looks at both the physical condition of a car park and how it is managed. Key areas considered include lighting, surveillance and monitoring, signage and information, cleanliness and maintenance, access and pedestrian routes, and measures for vulnerable users. A Park Mark award confirms that a car park has been designed and managed to reduce the risk of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The council obtained the accreditation in three of our car parks

- Gaol Street Car Park
- Garrick Street Multi Storey Car Park
- Maylord Orchards Car Park

Appendix 1

Why Park Mark matters

Park Mark gives people a clear, trusted signal that a car park is safe to use. For the public it means greater reassurance when leaving a vehicle, for businesses it helps attract customers, and for the council it provides an auditable standard to guide investment.

Accredited car parks typically see reductions in vehicle crime and antisocial behaviour, and the accreditation strengthens our case when applying for external funding or working with partners such as the police and tourism organisations.

How we will achieve accreditation

We will follow a staged, transparent process to secure Park Mark for suitable sites:

- Site audits: carry out a Park Mark risk assessment at every council managed car park to identify gaps.
- Improvement plans: publish a timebound plan for each site showing required works, the responsible officer and target completion dates.
- Deliver works: implement physical improvements such as lighting upgrades, CCTV where appropriate, clearer signage, improved surfacing and pedestrian routes, and formalised maintenance regimes.
- Management changes: introduce or strengthen site management, inspections and staffing where needed.
- Police assessment: invite Park Mark assessors to inspect sites once improvements are complete and maintain accreditation through regular reviews.

We will be open about progress and publish improvement plans so residents can see what is being done and when.

Lighting standards and maintenance

All council car parks will meet a consistent lighting standard to improve visibility and reduce fear of crime. New and upgraded lighting will be designed to deliver uniform illumination, minimise glare and avoid light spill into neighbouring properties. Where practical we will adopt LED lighting with smart controls to balance safety and energy efficiency.

CCTV and monitoring

We will expand CCTV coverage in a phased, risk based programme, prioritising the Hereford car parks, high footfall town centre sites and locations with a history of crime or antisocial behaviour.

Staffing and manned facilities

Appendix 1

We will align the operation of any new multistorey car parks with the latest national guidance and emerging legislation that requires a staffed presence to improve safety and customer service. The multistorey Car Parks (Safety) Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, proposes measures including mandatory staffing of multistorey car parks and enhanced physical safety standards; we will design our new facilities, so they meet these requirements as they become law.

Maintenance and reporting

We want our car parks to be clean, safe and well maintained, and that means dealing with problems quickly. To support this, we will run a programme of regular inspections across all council managed car parks. These checks will cover lighting, CCTV, signage, surfacing, drainage and general cleanliness. Staff will record issues digitally so they can be sent straight to our maintenance teams and prioritised for repair.

Alongside these inspections, we will introduce a simple online reporting tool so the public can tell us about problems as soon as they spot them.

Tackling crime, antisocial behaviour and protecting people

We want everyone using our car parks, highway or facilities whether they are customers, visitors or staff - to always feel safe. That's why we will take a zero-tolerance approach to crime and antisocial behaviour in and around our parking facilities and towards our customers and staff.

If serious incidents occur, we will work closely with the police to take swift and appropriate action. CCTV in car parks and body worn video used by our Civil Enforcement Officers will help us identify offenders, support investigations and, where necessary, assist in prosecutions. These tools are there to protect the public and to ensure our staff can carry out their duties safely.

Our enforcement activity will always be fair and transparent, but it will also be firm. We will focus on behaviour that puts people at risk, damages property or prevents others from safely using our car parks. Abuse or threats towards staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances, and we will take action against anyone who behaves in a way that compromises the safety of our teams or the public.

CEOs will be trained to identify safeguarding issues on street and report any concerns to the appropriate safeguarding teams.

By combining strong enforcement with visible safety measures, we aim to send a clear message: our car parks are safe places to use, and we will not tolerate behaviour that threatens the wellbeing of customers or staff.

Dropped kerb enforcement to support accessibility

Dropped kerbs are small features that make a huge difference. They allow wheelchair users, people with mobility impairments, parents with prams and anyone who needs a

Appendix 1

level crossing point to move around safely and independently. When a vehicle blocks a dropped kerb, it can force people into the road or cut off access to pavements — turning a simple journey into something stressful or unsafe. We want our streets to be accessible and inclusive for everyone, so we will take a firm and proactive approach to keeping dropped kerbs clear. Pedestrian dropped kerbs are actively enforced.

How residents can request enforcement at their own dropped kerb

If a vehicle is blocking the privately owned dropped kerb outside your home, you will be able to contact us directly to request enforcement. When a resident makes a formal request, we will attend and take action where appropriate. To make sure the system is fair and used correctly, we will ask for proof that you live at the affected property — for example, a permit, council tax reference or other simple verification.

Clear guidance on how to request this service, what information is needed and how quickly we respond will be published as part of the new enforcement process.

A community led approach

Your reports help us understand where the real problems are. If residents tell us that a particular dropped kerb is regularly blocked, we will investigate and prioritise enforcement in that area. Our commitment is straightforward:

- If a blocked dropped kerb is putting people at risk, we will act.
- If residents raise concerns, we will prioritise those locations.
- If a street is working well, we won't enforce unnecessarily.

By working with communities and responding to the issues people face every day, we can make our streets safer, more accessible and easier for everyone to move around.

Managing Abandoned Vehicles and Vehicle Removal

Abandoned vehicles are more than just an eyesore — they can be unsafe, attract antisocial behaviour, and take up valuable parking space that residents and visitors rely on. When a vehicle is left for long periods, damaged, or clearly no longer in use, it can make an area feel neglected and create real problems for the people who live and work nearby.

We want our streets and car parks to feel safe, well looked after and welcoming, so we will take a proactive and firm approach to dealing with abandoned vehicles.

How we will manage abandoned vehicles

We will strengthen our processes for identifying, investigating and removing abandoned vehicles by:

- Responding quickly when the public reports a suspected abandoned vehicle
- CEOs will actively report vehicles which appear to be abandoned

Appendix 1

- Working closely with the police and DVLA to check ownership and confirm whether a vehicle is genuinely abandoned
- Issuing notices and carrying out inspections to make sure the process is fair and transparent
- Removing vehicles promptly when they pose a safety risk, block essential access or meet the legal criteria for abandonment

This ensures that action is taken responsibly, legally and in a way that protects both the community and the rights of vehicle owners.

How the public can help

Residents often spot abandoned vehicles before anyone else. If you believe a vehicle has been left in a dangerous condition, is blocking access, or appears to have been abandoned, you will be able to report it to us easily through our online reporting tools.

Your reports help us act quickly and keep neighbourhoods safe, tidy and accessible.

Why this matters

Removing abandoned vehicles:

- improves safety and visibility on streets
- frees up parking spaces for genuine users
- reduces antisocial behaviour
- keeps neighbourhoods looking clean and cared for

By working together, we can make sure our streets remain places people feel proud of and safe using every day.

Clear Rules for suspending parking restrictions

There are times when parking restrictions need to be temporarily lifted — for example, when utility companies carry out essential works, when residents are moving house, or when a funeral or community event needs short term access. These suspensions are sometimes necessary, but they must be handled fairly, consistently and with good communication so people know what to expect.

We will introduce a clear and transparent process for suspending parking restrictions, making it easier for residents, businesses and visitors to understand how and why a suspension has been granted.

What this will include

- Clear criteria explaining when suspensions can be approved and when they cannot

Appendix 1

- Transparent information on costs, including both the administrative cost of arranging the suspension and any loss of revenue from the parking spaces being taken out of use
- Advance public communication, giving residents notice when a suspension is planned
- Onsite signage that clearly states the reason for the suspension and how long it will last
- Support in identifying suitable alternative parking, so residents and businesses affected by a suspension know where they can park instead

This ensures that suspensions are used only when genuinely necessary, and that the cost of providing them is recovered fairly rather than being passed on to general taxpayers.

Why this matters

A fair and consistent suspension process means:

- residents and businesses can plan ahead
- essential works can take place safely and efficiently
- parking spaces are managed responsibly
- the public understands what is happening and why
- the council recovers the true cost of providing the service
- people affected by a suspension have clear, practical alternatives

By setting out clear rules and communicating openly, we can make sure parking suspensions support the needs of the community without causing unnecessary disruption.

Working with the community to improve streets

Our enforcement approach is designed to be:

- Fair and consistent, with clear rules applied across the county
- Transparent, so people understand why enforcement happens
- Responsive, with public reports helping shape our priorities
- Focused on safety, especially around schools, junctions, bus stops and dropped kerbs
- Allow our officers to enforce restrictions such as zig zags and keep clear areas
- Supportive of communities and businesses, ensuring access and essential services can operate smoothly

By combining modern enforcement tools with strong community engagement, we aim to create streets that are safer, more accessible and easier for everyone to use.

Appendix 1

7. Harness technology and innovation

Modern, reliable and easy-to-use technology is essential for a parking service that meets the needs of today's residents, businesses and visitors. This chapter sets out how we will modernise our systems, improve payment options, support electric vehicles and make parking simpler, smarter and more sustainable.

Our approach is guided by the council's Digital First policy, but always with a commitment to accessibility, fairness and clear communication.

Upgrading Pay & Display machines and moving towards cashless parking

Many of our current pay and display machines are reaching the end of their life or no longer meet minimum standards. We will introduce a replacement programme to ensure all machines are modern, reliable and accessible.

Our long term aim is to move towards cashless parking, which is more cost effective to operate and maintain. This means:

- all new pay and display schemes will prioritise cashless payments
- cash options may be retained however not encouraged
- digital payments will be encouraged as the primary method

This approach supports more flexible pricing in the future and reduces the environmental and financial cost of maintaining cash handling equipment.

Transitioning to Pay on Exit

We will work towards introducing pay on exit systems in suitable car parks. This modern approach means drivers only pay for the time they actually use, removing the pressure to guess how long they'll need and helping make parking fairer and more convenient.

Supporting town centre economies

Pay on exit gives people the freedom to stay longer if they want to — whether that's an extra coffee, a spontaneous lunch, or more time browsing local shops. This flexibility supports town centre businesses by encouraging people to spend more time (and money) locally without worrying about rushing back to their car or risking a penalty.

More choice, less stress

With pay on exit:

- you don't need to decide your parking duration in advance

Appendix 1

- you won't have to return to the machine to extend your stay
- you don't need a parking app to top up your time
- you simply pay when you leave, based on the time you actually used

This makes parking easier for people who don't use smartphones, visitors who aren't familiar with local apps, and anyone who wants a more relaxed experience.

Mobile apps and digital payments

We will encourage the use of mobile apps and digital payments as the main way to pay for parking. These systems offer:

- quick and convenient payment
- reminders when parking is about to expire
- the ability to extend parking remotely
- reduced need for physical machines

We will continue to monitor the market for new parking technologies and payment systems, including the National Parking Platform (NPP). The NPP is a new national system being developed by the Department for Transport to make parking simpler and more consistent across the country. It allows different parking apps and systems to work together, so drivers can use their preferred app in any participating car park.

We are actively pursuing our participation in the current NPP trial to make sure it genuinely benefits local users — by improving choice, reducing confusion and making parking easier for residents, businesses and visitors.

Virtual permits

We will move to virtual permits, removing the need for physical paper permits. These will be managed online or through a call centre, making them easier to apply for, renew and update.

Virtual permits reduce administration, prevent misuse and support a more modern, flexible system.

Improving connectivity for digital services

Reliable connectivity is essential for digital parking systems. We will:

- map areas with poor 5G or SIM coverage
- work with network providers to improve connectivity
- ensure parking technology functions reliably across the county

This will support digital payments, virtual permits and future innovations.

Advertising opportunities in car parks

We will explore opportunities to use car parks for responsible advertising, including:

Appendix 1

- onsite posters and digital screens
- advertising on parking tickets
- partnerships with local businesses

Any advertising will be carefully managed to ensure it is appropriate, unobtrusive and supports local economic growth.

Civil Enforcement Officer safety and equipment

The safety of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) is a priority. We will introduce a minimum equipment and training standard for all CEOs that includes:

- Body worn video with secure storage and clear use policies.
- Personal alarm and two-way radio or mobile communications with direct link to control or emergency services.
- Personal protective equipment appropriate to role and risk assessment.
- Lone worker monitoring, regular updates to risk assessments and check in procedures for officers working alone.
- Deescalation, safeguarding and conflict management training, refreshed annually.
- Clear incident reporting and welfare support following any assault or threatening incident.
- We will prosecute any incident against CEO's

CEOs will be issued equipment that is robust, regularly maintained and replaced on a defined lifecycle. Use of body worn video will be governed by a published policy covering activation, retention, access and disclosure.

Using camera enforcement only where it improves safety

We want enforcement to feel fair, sensible and focused on the things that genuinely matter to people. That's why we are not planning to introduce blanket enforcement of all moving traffic offences across the county. Many of these powers are designed for dense urban areas with heavy congestion, and they are not always the right fit for a largely rural county where traffic patterns, road layouts and community needs are very different.

Instead, we will use camera enforcement carefully and responsibly, focusing only on locations where it clearly improves safety and traffic flow, protects vulnerable road users or responds directly to community concerns.

Where we *will* use camera enforcement

We will expand camera enforcement in places where dangerous or illegal behaviour puts people at risk or causes serious disruption. This includes:

- School Streets, to protect children at busy drop off and pickup times

Appendix 1

- Residents' Parking Zones, to ensure fair access for permit holders, reduce the need for paper permits and allow residents to update their details immediately and not reliant on a physical permit being issued.
- Red Routes and no stopping areas, where stopping can cause congestion or hazards
- Weight restricted roads, to protect vulnerable bridges and rural communities
- Access only roads

Camera enforcement will always be clearly signposted, used only where it is genuinely needed, and supported by clear public information.

Why we are not enforcing all moving traffic offences

Many moving traffic offences — such as banned turns, yellow box junctions or minor lane restrictions — are designed for large cities with complex junctions and high traffic volumes. Applying these powers everywhere would not be proportionate and could create confusion or unnecessary penalties in areas where the benefits are low.

Our approach is simple:

- If it's a direct safety issue, we will consider enforcement.
- If the public reports a recurring problem, we will investigate and act where appropriate.
- If it doesn't improve safety, traffic flow or fairness, we won't enforce it.

This ensures enforcement is targeted, reasonable and focused on the issues that matter most to local people.

Protecting junctions

Safe junctions are essential for everyone — whether you're walking, cycling or driving. When cars park too close to a junction, it becomes harder to see what's coming, and that split second loss of visibility can lead to near misses or serious collisions. It's one of the issues residents raise with us most often, and it's something we take seriously.

We will prioritise enforcement at junctions where the public has told us there is a problem. If people in a neighbourhood report repeated unsafe parking, we will investigate and take action. This ensures our enforcement is focused on the places that genuinely affect people's daily lives, not on blanket rules that don't reflect local needs.

Our approach is:

- If parking at a junction puts people at risk, we will act and implement restrictions to stop the dangerous parking/waiting.
- If residents report a recurring issue, we will prioritise it and ensure our Officers regularly visit the area.
- If a junction is working well, we won't enforce unnecessarily.

Appendix 1

By listening to communities and targeting the locations that matter most, we can make streets safer, reduce dangerous maneuvers, and give people more confidence when moving around their neighbourhoods.

This is enforcement shaped by the public, for the public — focused on safety, fairness and the real issues people face every day.

Keeping bus stops clear for safe and reliable travel

Bus stops need to stay clear so buses can pull in safely and passengers can get on and off without stepping into traffic. When a car or van blocks a bus stop — even for a short time — it forces buses to stop in the road, delays services, and creates real risks for older people, wheelchair users, parents with prams and anyone who relies on public transport.

We want bus travel to be safe, reliable and easy to use, so we will keep a strong focus on bus stop enforcement. Our teams will use a mix of patrols and, where appropriate, camera enforcement or restrictions to make sure these important spaces stay unobstructed.

This isn't about catching people out — it's about keeping the network moving and protecting the people who depend on it every day. When bus stops are kept clear:

- buses run more reliably
- passengers can board safely and confidently
- traffic flows more smoothly
- vulnerable users are better protected

We also want the public to feel comfortable telling us when a particular bus stop is regularly blocked. These reports help us target our efforts where they are most needed, ensuring enforcement supports the community and keeps public transport working well for everyone.

This is all part of our commitment to safer streets, better travel choices and a transport system that works for the whole community.

Working with communities to set priorities

We want residents, schools, parish councils and local businesses to feel confident coming to us about problems they face. Public reports will help shape where we focus camera enforcement, ensuring we act on the issues that genuinely affect people's daily lives — such as unsafe junctions, repeated illegal access, or dangerous behaviour near schools.

This community led approach means enforcement is not something done *to* people, but something we do *with* them to keep streets safe and accessible.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1

8. Manage parking demand effectively

Freight, taxis and delivery services are essential to the local economy. They keep shops supplied, support local businesses, enable online retail, and help people move around safely and efficiently. Our parking strategy will work closely with the forthcoming Freight Strategy, the Council Plan, LTP5 and wider transport policies to ensure these activities are supported in a safe, sustainable and well managed way.

Supporting freight parking and rest stops

Freight movement is the backbone of our economy. Even as vehicle technology improves and emissions fall, lorries will remain vital for supplying our communities. We want to make goods vehicle movements as efficient and safe as possible.

To support this, we will:

- work closely with the to be developed Freight Strategy (due 2026/27) to ensure full alignment across policies
- identify strategic rest stops and parking locations along key freight routes
- review existing rest stops and identify and prioritise improvements
- link to the Western Bypass project and the emerging Local Plan to identify locations for rest facilities
- direct freight movements to the most appropriate roads, reducing conflict with vulnerable road users
- explore opportunities for last mile delivery hubs, including links with Park & Choose sites
- ensure freight parking is safe, well located and does not impact residential areas unnecessarily

Providing suitable rest stops and clear routes helps freight operators plan efficiently while protecting communities from noise, pollution and Heavy Goods Vehicle movements in unsuitable areas.

Improving delivery driver behaviour and supporting last mile logistics

Delivery activity has grown rapidly, and we want to support it in a way that keeps streets safe and accessible.

We will:

- provide appropriately located and timed loading bays to support responsible delivery behaviour
- improve signing and lining so delivery drivers know where they can stop
- enforce Weight and Width Limits and prevent unsuitable vehicle movements through the introduction of new restrictions if needed
- support the development of last mile delivery solutions, reducing the need for large vehicles in town centres

Appendix 1

This approach helps delivery drivers do their jobs efficiently while reducing pavement obstruction, congestion and safety risks.

Supporting Local Businesses with better loading arrangements

We know how important deliveries and collections are for local shops, cafés, restaurants and services. When loading bays don't work well — or when they're in the wrong place or used at the wrong times — it can lead to vans and lorries stopping on pavements, blocking traffic or parking on double yellow lines. That's frustrating for businesses, inconvenient for residents and unsafe for pedestrians.

Instead of taking a one size fits all approach, we want to create loading arrangements that genuinely work for each area. Every high street, market town and neighbourhood has different needs, so we will work directly with local businesses to understand when and where loading is most needed.

This means:

- identifying the right locations for loading bays, based on real business activity
- setting sensible operating hours that reflect when deliveries actually happen
- reducing the need for unsafe or illegal loading on pavements or busy roads
- supporting the local economy by making it easier for businesses to operate smoothly
- freeing up space for all other vehicles when demand for loading/unloading is minimal

We also want the public to feel confident telling us when loading issues are causing problems — whether that's repeated blocking of footways, dangerous stopping points, or bays that no longer meet local needs. These reports will help us target enforcement and make improvements where they will have the biggest impact.

Our goal is simple: loading arrangements that support local businesses, keep streets safe and accessible, and reflect the needs of the community.

Protecting safety and reducing pollution

Freight and delivery routes will be planned and managed to minimise impacts on vulnerable people and sensitive locations.

We will:

- direct heavy vehicles away from schools, residential streets and busy pedestrian areas
- introduce or enforce weight limits where appropriate
- support cleaner vehicle technologies through wider EV and alternative fuel strategies

Appendix 1

This ensures freight activity supports the economy without compromising safety or air quality.

Reviewing taxi rank locations, capacity and hours

Taxis and private hire vehicles play a vital role in providing accessible, flexible transport — especially for people who cannot easily use buses or bikes.

We will:

- review taxi rank locations to ensure they are safe, visible and well placed
- assess capacity and hours of operation to match demand
- work closely with the taxi industry to understand their needs and support their role in the transport network
- ensure ranks are clearly signed, well maintained and easy for passengers to find

A well designed taxi network supports the nighttime economy, improves accessibility and provides safe travel options for residents and visitors.

9. Support climate change objectives and environmental improvement

The Strategy recognises that the way parking is managed across the county has a significant influence on travel behaviour, carbon emissions, and the quality of the environment. Supporting climate change mitigation and environmental improvement is a key objective of the strategy, helping to reduce reliance on private car use, encourage more sustainable travel choices, and minimise the impacts of traffic on air quality, landscape and local character.. A well-planned approach to parking helps ensure that transport patterns contribute to climate change mitigation while also enhancing the attractiveness, health, and liveability of Herefordshire's towns, villages, and rural areas, aligning with wider environmental and sustainability ambitions.

This strategy enables the council to continue to develop and implement technologies and ideas that will support these objectives. For example from new EV charging facilities on street, solar charging and car ports to improved greening and planting.

Electric vehicle charging

Supporting the transition to electric vehicles is an important part of our sustainability objectives. We will:

- **Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure in line with our EV Strategy**, recognising that current LEVI funding applies only to on-street locations to deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. Charging provision in council car parks will continue to be delivered through existing concession arrangements, including the Wenea contract and the three Highways England–funded charge points already in place.
- **Support the wider transition to electric vehicles across the county**, including exploring opportunities to engage with local businesses as set out in the EV Strategy.
- **Monitor, review and update the Herefordshire Council EV Strategy** to ensure it remains evidence-based and aligned with national policy and technological developments.
- **Support the delivery of EV charging infrastructure** in accordance with the EV Strategy. At present, the strategy and associated funding streams do not cover other alternative fuels.

Appendix 1

- **Aim to provide EV charging facilities in every suitable council-owned car park**, acknowledging that not all sites are technically or financially viable for charge point installation.
- **Ensure all new installations are reliable, accessible and compliant with current government regulations**, and updated as required to meet future regulatory or technological changes.

As set out in LTP5, “there are to be more electric vehicle charging points,” and our parking strategy will help deliver this ambition.

Park and Ride

As growth continues in the south of Hereford, we want to give people more reliable and attractive options to travel into the city without adding to congestion. One of the key actions we will explore is the development of a new Park and Ride site along the Southern Link Road.

This location has the potential to intercept car journeys before they enter the busiest parts of the network, helping to ease traffic levels and support cleaner, more sustainable travel choices.

To make the Park and Ride a success, we will work closely with bus operators to make sure services are frequent, reliable and convenient. A big part of this will be improving the road network between the site and the city by looking at ways to give buses priority, such as:

- Targeted bus priority measures at junctions
- Selective road space reallocation where appropriate
- Technology solutions such as traffic signal priority
- Ensuring the route offers journey time benefits over driving into the city

Our aim is to create a Park and Ride that offers a genuine time and convenience advantage, making it an easy first choice for commuters, visitors and residents.

10. Ensure long-term financial sustainability and good governance

A modern parking service needs fair pricing, well maintained facilities and transparent governance. This chapter sets out how we will manage parking charges, protect maintenance budgets, improve public reporting and publish clear performance information each year.

Our approach is designed to be fair, consistent and easy to understand, while supporting wider transport and sustainability goals.

A fair and transparent pricing policy

Parking charges will typically follow an inflation-linked annual adjustment, though Cabinet may amend this approach if required.

This means:

- prices will increase once a year in line with inflation
- increases will be rounded for clarity and simplicity

This strategy is not about what charges are set but it will state the required method for setting prices.

When reviewing charges, we will consider:

- fairness for residents and visitors including consideration of protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010
- the need to balance demand across car parks
- the cost of public transport alternatives
- the importance of encouraging off-street parking rather than on street
- the full cost of providing and maintaining parking infrastructure
-

Free parking and free parking periods will be reviewed as required.

Expanding season ticket options

We will widen the range of season tickets available and ensure they offer better value for regular users. This may include:

- more flexible durations
- multicar park options

Appendix 1

- pricing that reflects modern working patterns and value for money

Season tickets will support commuters, workers and residents who rely on our car parks regularly.

Protected maintenance budget for signs and lines

Clear signs and well maintained line markings are essential for fairness and safety. To ensure this remains a priority a ring fenced budget funded by income generated through parking, ensuring that the money raised from parking is reinvested directly into improving and maintaining the parking service. This includes:

- consistent standards across the county
- timely repairs and renewals
- prioritisation based on safety and need

By ringfencing funding in this way, we can keep the parking network clear, accessible and easy to understand — and ensure that those who use the service directly contribute to its upkeep and improvement.

KPIs and annual reporting

To ensure transparency and accountability, we will:

- publish a clear set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- adopt an open data approach, making information accessible to the public
- produce an annual report summarising performance, trends and improvements

This will help residents understand how the parking service is performing and where we are investing in improvements.

Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026–2041

Delivery Plan (Aligned to Strategy Themes)

Introduction

The Parking Strategy will be delivered through a phased programme of activity aligned directly to the strategy's core themes. This ensures that strategic priorities are translated into clear, deliverable actions over time, responding to the issues identified through consultation and operational evidence.

Delivery is structured across:

- **Short term (0–1 years):** Immediate priorities
- **Medium term (2–5 years):** Scaling delivery and targeted interventions
- **Long term (5+ years):** Strategic infrastructure and integration

All actions will be subject to appropriate governance, funding approval and business case development where required.

Delivery by Strategy Theme

Years 0–1 (Short Term Delivery)

Focus: Safety, enforcement, accessibility and service improvements

Growth, Developments and Events

- Identification of coach parking concerns and solutions
- Review of travel plan requirements for new developments, employment sites etc to ensure they have appropriate and safe parking
- Initial feasibility and scoping for a multi-storey car park in Hereford
- Progression of multi storey car park proposal; will be subject to business case and funding approval

Commercial Activity: Freight, Taxis and Deliveries

- Loading provision improvements – work with local businesses to identify areas of improvement for existing loading facilities
- Development of a new Freight Strategy
- Review of taxi provision and identification of improvements

Residents, Disabled Users and Equitable Access

- Strengthening protection and prioritisation of disabled users – review existing provision to ensure it meets the standards set in the strategy
- Development of a clear process for introducing residents' parking schemes, contact residents of areas where the consultation respondents have asked for the area to be considered for residents parking.

Visitors, Tourism and Overnight Parking

- Implementation of an overnight parking policy
- Identification of “van life” issues and potential solutions

Safety, Security and User Confidence

- Junction protection enforcement – county wide approach to support no parking on junctions
- Dropped kerb enforcement
- Bus stop and school keep clear enforcement – countywide orders to allow for enforcement and ANPR enforcement for school streets
- Weight limit enforcement – ANPR trial with a selected number of locations

- Expansion of Park Mark accreditation – delivery plan to be developed for all car parks to achieve the accreditation

Management and Enforcement

- Identification and prioritisation of enforcement hotspots (data-led and consultation-informed)
- Refresh of parking enforcement policy and priorities – link to the strategy
- Strengthening compliance through targeted enforcement in areas where the public have requested additional enforcement

Pricing, Maintenance and Governance

- Establishment of reinvestment model for parking income into asset maintenance
- Improved public reporting tools
- Improved communication on parking processes and services

Technology, Payments and Innovation

- Introduction of virtual permits (including National Parking Platform)
- Exploration of technology-enabled solutions to improve service efficiency
- Trial use of ANPR enforcement
- Website update

Sustainable Travel Integration

- Improvements to existing Park and Choose sites – add car share
- Rail station parking improvements countywide

Years 2–5 (Medium Term Delivery)

Focus: Scaling delivery and targeted improvements

Growth, Developments and Events

- Delivery of multi-storey car park (subject to planning and funding approval)

Commercial Activity: Freight, Taxis and Deliveries

- Development and pilot of freight rest stops
- Implementation of taxi provision improvements
- Implementation of loading facility improvements

Residents, Disabled Users and Equitable Access

- Delivery of residents' parking schemes
- Targeted improvements to parking layouts and accessibility

Visitors, Tourism and Overnight Parking

- Delivery of facilities to support overnight parking and manage van life activity

Safety, Security and User Confidence

- Continued expansion of Park Mark accreditation
- Ongoing improvements to safety-focused parking interventions

Management and Enforcement

- Continued refinement of enforcement approach

Pricing, Maintenance and Governance

- Continued reinvestment into car park maintenance and asset improvement

Technology, Payments and Innovation

- Expansion of digital and technology-enabled parking services

Sustainable Travel Integration

- Development of new Park and Choose sites
- Further improvements to rail station parking

Years 5+ (Long Term Delivery)

Focus: Strategic infrastructure and long-term transformation

Commercial Activity: Freight, Taxis and Deliveries

- Delivery of freight rest stops and associated facilities

Residents, Disabled Users and Equitable Access

- Ongoing enhancement of inclusive and accessible parking provision

Visitors, Tourism and Overnight Parking

- Long-term management of tourism and overnight parking demand

Safety, Security and User Confidence

- Full integration of quality and safety standards across the parking estate

Management and Enforcement

- Mature, intelligence-led enforcement model

Pricing, Maintenance and Governance

- Long-term sustainable asset management approach

Technology, Payments and Innovation

- Fully integrated digital parking service

Sustainable Travel Integration

- Expansion of Park and Choose sites
- Continued improvements to rail station parking



Title of report: Food Waste Collection Implementation

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Cabinet member: Cabinet Member for Culture and Environment

Classification

Part exempt.

Appendix B to this report is exempt by virtue of the paragraph(s) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the constitution pursuant to Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

- 3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

Following the successful award and mobilisation of the new recyclables and waste collection service, Cabinet resolved to approve the introduction of the new food waste collections scheme in May 2025. This report recommends the optimal approach to implementing this scheme and sets out the rationale for this recommendation against other potential options.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet approves the commencement of a new food waste collection service from September 2027 as a countywide service implementation;**
- b) **Cabinet authorises the revenue expenditure detailed in paragraphs 49 and 50 to mobilise the service,**
- c) **Cabinet authorises the capital expenditure detailed in paragraphs 43 and 50, to purchase and deliver the new food containers and caddy liners and to undertake the required depot improvements works;**
- d) **Cabinet delegate all operational decisions to implement the above recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer - Economy and Environment.**

Alternative options

1. Phased roll-out moving from initial service delivery across urban areas to full-service delivery across the whole county, with four tranches covering 14 months - this is not recommended primarily due to this approach resulting in a higher cost.
2. Countywide implementation of the food waste collection service, with collections commencing at an alternative time to the recommendation. Other dates within the financial year 2027/28 have been considered for first collections but the recommendation has been chosen due to the best combination of benefits and reduced draw backs across a number of metrics as highlighted in this report, and best possible fit with the legislative deadline.

Key considerations

Background

3. Herefordshire Council currently provides a range of household waste and recycling services to approximately 91,000 households across the county. Each year, the council collects over 82,000 tonnes of waste from households and businesses, with around 40% of household waste being reused, recycled or composted in recent years. This performance reflects sustained effort to promote recycling, with the council keen to introduce the widest possible range of recycling options for residents. 99% of all collected household waste is either recycled, composted or sent to generate energy from waste in Herefordshire.
4. Under the Government's "Simpler Recycling" reforms (appendix E) and wider environmental legislation, local authorities were required to introduce separate weekly food waste collections by 31 March 2026. While this is an initiative that has been imposed on the council, it does align with Herefordshire's Integrated Waste Management Strategy which identifies the introduction of a food waste collection service as a priority measure to reduce residual waste and increase recycling.

5. On 1 May 2025, [Cabinet approved](#) the recommendation to commence the new household food waste collection service on the condition of sufficient annual new burdens revenue grant being received from government. In November 2025 it was announced by government that new burdens funding would not be provided separately and instead the 'Local Government Finance Settlement 2026-2027 to 2028-2029' would need to be used to fund the service. Unfortunately, the Local Government Finance Settlement for Herefordshire did not include sufficient funding to introduce the service without needing to remodel the business plan and review the ability of the council to fund the service in the 2026/27 budget cycle. This means that the introduction of the service has been unavoidably delayed until the 2027/28 financial year.
6. On determining and understanding the change in funding from government, a detailed business modelling process commenced in early 2026 to determine the most appropriate delivery model for the introduction of the new household food waste service. This modelling reviewed and balanced the operational, logistical, financial and legislative considerations required to bring the service to Herefordshire residents at the right time to best comply with the government requirement whilst also balancing the need to deliver a balanced council budget and the best possible customer experience.
7. Approaches considered include phased and non-phased approaches being introduced at varying points in time. Additional considerations for other key factors such as participation rates, technical operational challenges and additional efficiency opportunities have been considered through this report and the supplementary FAQs (appendix C).
8. The business modelling clearly demonstrated that a countywide implementation represents the most cost-effective, efficient and low-risk approach to delivering the new household food waste service. Furthermore, a commencement date of September/October 2027 provides the optimal balance between operational readiness, financial sustainability, resident participation and long-term service success.

New Food Waste Service

Business Case

9. The business case for the recommended method and commencement period is summarised in Appendix A.
10. The contractor had provided, as part of the procurement process in 2022, a countywide implementation approach which outlined accurate itemised costings for that method. HC requested that the contractor consider a realistic, phased approach along with an updated cost model and any risks associated. The contractor provided their proposal based on the larger vehicles being used across the urban areas initially, with further vehicles included within later tranches to provide collections across rural locations.
11. In conjunction with the contractor's proposal the resource requirements for communications, internal staff resources, and the associated disposal costs for both a phased and countywide rollout were developed in order to provide a full option cost analysis.
12. The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Food Waste Collection guidance for communications was considered in order to plan the methods of communication to residents prior to container deliveries and through service implementation.

13. It was identified that communication across a phased rollout would be more complicated and in order to mitigate confusion among residents it would be necessary to directly communicate with only those properties prior to delivery of their caddies and start of collections in each phase, this resulted in higher costs of communications. Where a countywide approach is taken, it is possible to use Royal Mails bulk delivery service with only a limited requirement for direct mailing in areas which cross the county border.
14. Alongside the above, costs have been included to provide service information leaflets and collection calendars for delivery with the caddies to households.
15. Other communications that have been incorporated into the plan for both options would be the use of Herefordshire Now's back cover as a new service announcement, paid for media, banners at HWRCs and resources for other pop-up events that would see the Waste Management team promoting the service introductions.
16. The internal resource requirement within the customer services team was also identified as requiring additional officers in order to answer queries and questions. This resource would be required over a longer period of time for a phased implementation resulting in higher costs.
17. The collection of food waste quantities was analysed using WRAP's indicative yields which is 1.5kg per household served per week. This takes into consideration that not all households will participate within the service.
18. The diversion of food waste from the Energy from Waste facility (EfW) to an anaerobic digestion facility will cost circa £119 per tonne less. This saving was agreed as part of a variation to the waste disposal contract in 2023.
19. In summary, the justification for the countywide implementation approach over the alternative phased approach is financial (£370k less cost across the first three years, assuming identical commencement date of June 2027).
20. The justification for the September / October Commencement date is through the considerations of risk mitigation (this is considered the best time of year operationally), service efficiency (this is considered to be an optimal time for the public to adapt to this type of change) and opportunities to enhance the waste service (this time enables prior round optimisation which will maximise the efficiency of our entire waste collection service).
21. The below table summarises Appendices A and B for quick reference to advantages and disadvantages of each method:

Criteria	Phased (June 2027)	Countywide (June 2027)	Countywide (Sept/Oct 2027)
Overall cost (3 years)	Highest cost	-£370k	-£748k
Mobilisation costs	Highest cost	-£421k	-£421k
Cost per household collection (during implementation period)	40% higher	Typical	Typical

Financial certainty	Lower – reliance on estimates and unmodelled elements	High – based on procurement pricing	High – based on procurement pricing
Operational complexity	High – multiple tranches and prolonged mobilisation	Low – single, coordinated rollout	Low – single, coordinated rollout
Mobilisation duration	Extended over 2+ years	Shorter, defined mobilisation period	Shorter, defined mobilisation period
Operational efficiency	Reduced during rollout; delayed “business as usual”	Achieved earlier post-launch	Achieved earlier post-launch
Workforce recruitment	Gradual but prolonged; risk of inefficiency	Concentrated but more efficient	Concentrated but more efficient
Communications approach	Complex, repeated, highly targeted; higher cost	Clear, consistent countywide campaign	Clear, consistent countywide campaign
Customer experience	Potential confusion and increased enquiries	Simpler, clearer offer to all residents	Simpler, clearer offer to all residents
Participation rates	Likely lower due to confusion and staggered access	Higher due to clarity, consistency and time of year	Highest due to optimal time for behaviour change
Legislative compliance	Delayed further due to staggered rollout	Earliest compliance	Earlier compliance relative to phased
Environmental benefits	Delayed (slower tonnage capture and diversion)	Realised soonest and at greater scale	Realised sooner than phased and at greater scale
Disposal savings	Delayed (~£380k less savings in modelling period)	Achieved earliest	Achieved earlier than phased
Commercial waste opportunities	Delayed growth; risk of lost revenue and market share	Enables earliest expansion and income	Enables earlier expansion and income
Supply chain risk	Higher – prolonged exposure to cost volatility	Lower – shorter, more controlled period	Lower – shorter, more controlled period
Vehicle utilisation	Increased risk for some due to longer underuse	Full utilisation from service start	Higher due to delayed service start
Programme risk	Higher – multiple dependencies and uncertainty	Lower – simpler delivery model	Lower – simpler delivery model
Strategic alignment	Weaker – inefficient and delayed outcomes	Increased alignment with financial and service objectives	Strong – aligns with financial and service objectives
Service Optimisation	Round optimisation not possible	Round optimisation not Possible	Round optimisation achievable
Overall value for money	Lowest	Strong	Strongest

Recommendation	Not viable	Viable but not preferred	Preferred option

Implementation

22. The proposed new household food waste service will include the following and further details are illustrated in appendix C:
 - a. Purchase of new food waste containers
 - i. Small food waste caddy (7 litre) for residents to use in the kitchen.
 - ii. Provision of compostable caddy liners (starter roll)
 - iii. A larger (23 litre) outdoor caddy with lockable lid to use for collection.
 - b. Communal properties will require a more bespoke approach due to the complexities associated with such properties. Provision for an initial trial for up to ten communal sites to receive a shared unit which encloses a wheeled bin has been included.
 - c. Temporary operation and maintenance costs for dedicated new food waste collection fleet until the service is implemented.
 - d. Depot improvements at the Waste Collection depots to facilitate the vehicle fleet and additional staffing requirements.
 - e. Amendments to the waste transfer station to allow the off-loading of food waste prior to bulk transfer to the AD facility.

Mobilisation

23. FCC Environment can achieve mobilisation for the recommended commencement date of September 2027; this also includes consideration for the prerequisite round optimisation work as outlined in the business case in appendix A. This is on the assumption that they are commissioned to commence in August 2026.
24. The mobilisation includes resource allocation for:
 - a. Project management and staffing
 - b. ICT, legal and training provision
 - c. Communication and promotional resources
25. A dedicated communications and engagement campaign will be finalised and launched prior to the new service commencement date in order to raise awareness of the new service and encourage participation, whilst also informing residents on the items that can be diverted from their general rubbish bin and recycled through the new service.
26. Severn Waste Services require a minimum of six months for appropriate capital works to support food waste disposal activities on the transfer station.

Approach for collection for other property types

27. The Waste Management Team have actively been assessing flats across Herefordshire. Where they have identified that flats are suitable to receive a caddy-based service, like standard street level residential properties, residents of those flats will be given the opportunity to opt in to the service from the start. This is to ensure that caddies are not delivered and left out on the streets (e.g. for flats above shops) as the person that has requested the service will expect delivery and take them into the property.
28. Where the team have identified that a shared communal service is required, the service introduction will take place at a later date. It is estimated that the number of properties that will require a non-standard approach (either opt-in or communal approach) will be circa 6000 properties.
29. Service introductions at these properties are more complex and therefore require careful planning of space, access, and collection arrangements with all stakeholders. The business model includes provision for an initial trial to include a cross section of ten sites to define the most appropriate methodology.

Community impact

30. A comprehensive communications and engagement strategy is being developed to support the mobilisation and implementation of the new service.
31. The new food waste collection service will have a positive impact on contributing towards local and regional strategy priorities, targets and legislation. These all are complementary to The Council Plan 2024 – 2028 objective to reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.

Environmental impact

32. The council seeks to treat waste as a resource, supporting a more circular economy for Herefordshire, reducing, reusing and recycling materials so that they stay in use for longer and offset use of raw materials. Sending food waste to anaerobic digestion results in both material recycling and high efficiency energy recovery. It also provides a biofertilizer which retains the essential nutrients to be used to grow further crops.
33. In order to ensure that the resulting biofertilizer does not contribute to local river quality issues, digestate resulting from the anaerobic digestion process will not be used within either the River Wye or River Lugg catchment areas.
34. Waste composition analysis undertaken in Herefordshire highlights that a substantial proportion of residual (black bin) waste could be diverted through improved collection systems. Analysis of general rubbish waste bins across the county found 26.5% of residual waste is compostable material such as food and garden waste, in addition, a further 15.8% was categorised as non-compostable food waste (e.g. meat and dairy).
35. Based on moderate household participation (circa 45%), modelling undertaken by Frith Resource Management (FRM) estimated that 5,311 tonnes of food waste could be diverted from the residual waste stream annually.
36. The FRM figures have been updated to align with the WRAP ready reckoner tool which estimates an expected yield of between 1.2kg - 2kg of food waste per household served, per week.

37. HC has assumed this would be an average of 1.5kg of food waste per household served, per week, which equates to circa 6500 tonnes of food waste per annum. This will significantly increase the Council's recycling rate and combined with the accompanying chargeable garden waste service is estimated to increase recycling rates by 8% in the first year. This would increase HC above the current average recycling rate of 44.6% across the country.
38. The introduction of the food waste service, without any other changes to the recycling and rubbish collection service, will result in an estimated additional one million kg of CO₂ equivalent. This is due to the separate fleet of vehicles required for the collections and associated emissions, and the environmental burden of the provision of the collection containers.

Equality duty

39. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
40. The previous cabinet decisions to approve the new contract and collection model were considered in line with the council's Equality Act 2010 duties and an extensive public consultation exercise was undertaken.
41. A new Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix D) has been carried out, all actions as detailed will be built into the project plan. Assisted collections, which is a service managed by the waste management team will also be expanded to include food waste collections. The Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be reviewed should a new impact be identified that has not been considered within the EIA.

Resource implications

42. On 10 February 2023 Full Council approved the inclusion of £18.09m within the Council's capital programme for the provision of new vehicles, new receptacles, depot enhancement and service improvement.
43. The total capital expenditure required to deliver the service for the recommended approach is £3.7 million. This is funded by £1.8 million grant, £500k borrowing and £1.4 million waste reserve.
44. On 9 January 2024 DEFRA wrote to all local authorities providing indicative capital transitional grant for the introduction of weekly household food waste collections. This allocation was confirmed as £1,847,132 for Herefordshire. This money has already been received and is detailed below.

Kitchen Caddies (inc spares)	£186,276
Kerbside caddies (inc spares)	£405,609
Communal wheeled bins (inc spares)	£27,647
Vehicles (inc spares)	£1,227,600
TOTAL	£1,847,132

45. The capital allocation from DEFRA is only for the household food waste collections and does not include contributions towards commercial food waste collections as these are expected to operate on a full cost recovery basis. As the DEFRA capital allocation model was based on 2023 costs and housing numbers there is a gap between the capital allocation and the actual 2026 costs. The Council did challenge the capital allocation at the time of allocation; however, this was unsuccessful.
46. On 5 March 2025 DEFRA confirmed the revenue transition payment to support with the mobilisation of this new service. This was partially paid in 2024/25 with the remaining paid in 2025/26. This is detailed below:

2024/25		2025/26		Total
Container delivery	Project Management	Procurement	Communications	
£302,475	£67,000	£2,000	£160,305	£531,780

47. On 9th February 2026, the government released the 'Local Government Finance Settlement 2026-2027 to 2028-2029' which outlined an alternative funding method using a central spending power pot rather than itemised new burdens which seeks to give increased powers to local authorities to allocate funds appropriately to cover their statutory obligations.
48. This change from the original intention to provide dedicated new burdens funding for ongoing revenue collection costs created an uncertainty in funding the service therefore we have reviewed alternative options for household food waste roll-out to ensure best value for money. As covered within this report, the recommended approach is the countywide implementation carried out from September/October 2027.
49. The estimated annual revenue costs of the service are £0.1 million in 2026/27, £1.2 million in 2027/28 and £1.6 million in 2028/29. The total additional annual cost to the council for the food waste service once fully implemented is £1.6m.
50. The table below provides an overview of the estimated annual revenue costs and total capital expenditure required to deliver the service for the recommended county wide approach commencing from September 2027. Supporting financial details, which are itemised in Appendix B, are exempt from publication due to commercially sensitive content so the table below is limited to headline figures.

Revenue Budget	Countywide Approach: Sept 2027			
	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Total £'000
Household Food Waste				
Operational Expenditure	181	2,106	2,398	4,686
Waste disposal saving for diverting EfW to AD	-	(433)	(743)	(1,176)
Expenditure	181	1,673	1,655	3,510
<i>New Burdens - Transitional grant</i>	(97)	(132)	-	(229)
<i>DEFRA Container Delivery grant</i>	-	(302)	-	(302)
Income	(97)	(434)	-	(532)
Net Expenditure - Household Food Waste	84	1,239	1,655	2,978
Net Expenditure - Commercial Food Waste	15	(6)	(18)	(9)
Total Revenue budget	99	1,233	1,637	2,969

Capital Programme	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	Total £'000
Expenditure	3,090	620	-	3,709
DEFRA Food waste vehicle grant	(1,228)	-	-	(1,228)
DEFRA Food waste container grant	-	(620)	-	(620)
External Grant Funding	(1,228)	(620)	-	(1,847)
HC Capital borrowing (Vehicle Costs)	(500)	-	-	(500)
Waste earmarked reserve	(1,363)	-	-	(1,363)
HCC Funding	(1,862)	-	-	(1,862)
Total Capital Programme	-	0	-	-

Total Revenue & Capital Programme	99	1,233	1,637	2,969

51. There are a number of overall assumptions that have been built into the costs as follows:

- a. The figures presented reflect contract prices as of September 2025 and other costs as of April 2026, and do not factor in estimates for the potential impact of contractual indexation or the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy inflationary assumptions for future years.
- b. 86,068 properties are assumed for the waste disposal saving, which is made up of 93000 properties which allows for growth into the next financial year given the rollout period in 27/28, but excludes 5000 flats and 1932 registered empty properties.
- c. Waste disposal saving this has been assumed based on 86,068 properties (this excludes flats) at a rate of £119 per tonne, but is subject to participation in the scheme from residents.
- d. Food waste tonnages are estimated based on 86,068 properties at a collection rate of 1.5kg per household served, per annum.
- e. Cost of food waste containers are at current prices and therefore may still be subject to change at point of purchase.
- f. The costs for the trial of ten communal property sites are based on current prices and therefore may still be subject to change at point of purchase.
- g. Commercial food waste collections are assumed at 0.08kg/180 litre bin, per month from May 27.
- h. Expansion of commercial food waste collections are dependent upon the implementation of household food waste collections, and as such growth for both tonnage and income are assumed only after household collection services are fully rolled out.

Legal implications

52. The new waste collection contract was developed with external specialist legal and procurement support to include the future options for the proposed additional collection service and was procured in accordance with the Council's Procurement Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
53. The waste disposal extension in Dec 2023 was undertaken in line with the Council's Procurement Rules and Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations. This extension includes the provision for the future inclusion of food waste disposal through a variation agreement.
54. From 31st March 2026 the Council had a statutory duty to introduce weekly food waste collections under Section 57 (8) of the Environment Act 2021 and a new responsibility under the updated Simpler Recycling guidance November 2024.
55. HC has informed DEFRA of its intention to commence food waste collections at the start of financial year 27/28 which has been noted by DEFRA, although DEFRA have not granted an official extension as the proposed date is already outside of the statutory duties outlined in the Environment Act 2021. The inferred expectation from DEFRA is that HC are to implement food waste collection urgently, as the legislation date has already passed. DEFRA will be contacted upon Cabinet approval of implementation to confirm the anticipated timeline. It is anticipated that the logic underpinning this recommendation to Cabinet will also be accepted by DEFRA.

Risk management

56. The below table highlights risk and mitigations associated with the recommended rollout model:

Risk/Opportunity	Mitigation
Allocation of funding from centralised budget	This risk must be accepted as service delivery is a statutory requirement and therefore adequate budget should be allocated.
Public engagement and successful roll out of the new service	Public consultation exercises identified that: · 86% of residents agreed that more needs to be done to reduce waste and to increase recycling. · 60% of residents accept the need for the council to change the collection service. A wholesale countywide implementation results in less confusion or risk of errors in communication to the public as well as lower costs. A robust engagement plan will be developed with the communications team. HC staff will ensure close co-ordination with the contractor to ensure preparations are thoroughly planned and full training delivered to all staff so that

	deliveries are smooth and the likelihood of missed collections is reduced.
Value for Money	The procurement of the new waste collection contract, including the optional food waste service, was conducted with the support of specialist technical and legal consultants to ensure best value for money. Both phased and non-phased approaches for implementation have been reviewed. The countywide approach is the most cost-efficient approach to food waste collection as detailed within this report.
Waste disposal saving	Waste disposal saving has been assumed based on 86,068 properties (this excludes flats) at a rate of £119 per tonne. HC staff will ensure close co-ordination with the contractor to ensure preparations are thoroughly planned and full training delivered to all staff so that deliveries are smooth and the likelihood of missed collections is reduced. This will help to keep participation rates and subsequent tonnages collected as high as possible. The project will proactively monitor participation through tonnages and reflect any change within the food waste business case. Any changes outside of threshold would be escalated through the appropriate project board.
Waste collection cost increases	Contract cost prices are as of September 2025 which is the contract year start. No additional inflation has been applied thereafter. Potential inflation impacts will be considered upon release of indexation and included within the bid for contract inflation for the current financial year. Future years will be subject to the normal council inflation processes. It should be noted that contingency has not been applied at this stage to the project, it is assumed that provision will be made available as appropriate should this be required.
Cost of food waste containers	The costs are based on current prices and therefore may still be subject to change at point of purchase.

	Appropriate procurement process will ensure that best value for money is achieved based on the current market.
Communal properties and non-standard housing are unable to receive food waste collections	Identifying properties: The Waste Management Team have already commenced a detailed assessment of flats across Herefordshire. It is estimated that the number of properties that will require a non-standard approach (either opt-in or communal approach) will be circa 6000 properties. Opt-in: Where the team have identified that flats are suitable to receive a caddy-based service like standard street level residential properties, resident of those flats will be given the opportunity to opt in to the service as part of the countywide collections commencing in September. Communal option: Where the team have identified that a shared service is required, the service introduction will take place at a later date as service introductions at these properties are more complex and therefore require careful planning of space, access, and collection arrangements with all stakeholders. The business model includes provision for an initial trial to include a cross section of ten sites to define the most appropriate methodology (the cost of containers and housing are based on three time-limited budget quotations and are therefore subject to price increases).
Resourcing the collection service with qualified drivers	Our collection contractor will plan and implement a full and thorough recruitment process, offering internal opportunities for non-qualified staff to gain their drivers qualification, and starting early enough to secure the necessary resource before service implementation commences.

Consultees

The following consultations have taken place:

Consultation	Date	Feedback
Political Group Consultation	9 th July 2026	The Political Group Consultation took place on 9th July 2026. Members from the Conservative Party, The Green Party and the Liberal Democrats joined the consultation which was recorded and shared with all members alongside the presentation and an accompanying list of draft Frequently Asked Questions. No objections were raised and positive feedback was provided by members regarding the food waste

		collection implementation. Members discussed importance of continuing the key message around waste reduction, and importance of increasing participation such as same day collections for food waste as the recycling and residual collections where possible, clear information and communication to residents on the timescales and how they will use the service. Further clarification was sought around what food waste items can be put in the caddies, how residents might use the indoor and outdoor caddies, the plan for other property types such as flats, and how the collections will take place. The option to opt out of the service was raised, but the provision of containers to all properties was outlined as important to ensure that the food waste service is available for current residents as well as for future use. A clarification was requested in regard to average annual cost to householders of liners, this has been included within appendix C. It was also outlined that we have a significant number of people whose first language is not English, and therefore a request was made to ensure information is provided in other languages on request as appropriate. It was agreed that the webpage would be updated in due course with clear set of frequently asked questions so that residents are clear on all appropriate aspects of the food waste service. An information leaflet will also be provided to residents with the delivery of their caddies, and this will feature the alternative formats logo for those requiring the information in an alternate language.
Public Consultation	February 2021	MEL Research undertook a public consultation exercise on future waste collection models which reported that 56% of the 3,498 respondents indicated that they would use a household food waste collection service, with a further 20% of respondents replying 'maybe'.
Commercial survey	February 2021	MEL Research also undertook a business waste survey in February 2021 where 70% of the 181 business respondents confirmed they and/or other members of their business would be likely to use a food waste collection service if it was available and affordable.
Commercial survey	January 2025	HC undertook a subsequent business food waste survey which indicated of the 340 responses, 146 are required to have a separate food collection from 31 March 2025 and would use our service. A further 193 are not required to have a separate food collection but 25 indicated that they would use the service.

Appendices

Appendix A: Food Waste Collection Business Case summary

Appendix B: Food Waste collection Business case financial model - EXEMPT
Appendix C: Food Waste Collection Service Implementation FAQs
Appendix D: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for Food Waste Collection Service
Appendix E: Background paper - Simpler Recycling in England

Background papers

None

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report:

DEFRA: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

HC: Herefordshire Council

Appendix A: Food Waste Collection Business Case Summary

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 30 July 2026

Report by: Cabinet member for Culture and Environment

1. This appendix provides the detail of the analysis that has been undertaken to determine the best approach for implementing the new household food waste service, effectively providing the business case for proceeding with the recommendation provided in the main report.
2. Due to the complex nature of the service delivery and the operational, logistical and legislative considerations, this appendix discusses the outcome of the business case analysis through the combination of key figures and a qualitative assessment of the relative benefits of the recommendation against the other options considered.
3. The financial model for all options are included within Appendix B. The business case justification for the recommended solution of County wide implementation with commencement in September, is rationalised in two stages:
 - a. Stage A: A comparison of the phased approach against the County wide approach where the commencement dates are assumed to be identical (June 2027).
 - b. Stage B: A review of County wide implementation across alternative commencement dates.

Stage A:

4. To compare the phased approach with the county wide approach, the assumptions and resources as outlined within paragraphs 9 to 18 of the cabinet paper, were applied:
 - a. The contractor had provided as part of the procurement process in 2022 a countywide implementation approach which outlined accurate itemised costings for that method. HC requested that the contractor consider a realistic, phased approach along with an updated cost model and any risks associated. The contractor provided their proposal based on the larger vehicles being used across the urban areas initially, with further vehicles included within later tranches to provide collections across rural locations.
 - b. The costs for delivery of containers were estimated as the contractor was unable to gain quotations for the variation to four separate mobilisations within the timescales. An additional £1 per delivery was applied to costs within the phased collection model to account for this.
5. For the phased approach in comparison to the county wide approach, the following benefits and drawbacks have been considered:
 - a. Operational - potentially lower risk of overwhelming FCC resource, through gradual increase in collections over the tranches.

- b. Gradual recruitment results in reduced risk of unfilled roles at the collection contractor, especially drivers, however, this may be offset by the greater complexity of trying to recruit and train staff across a longer timescale.
- c. Communications – HC would need to provide bespoke communications to individual properties on multiple occasions. There is a challenge in targeted communications and the logistical restrictions this imposes. i.e. phased approach offers no flexibility benefit and reduces benefit of widespread campaign types or county wide media coverage as all communications need careful consideration and targeting to reduce confusion, follow up enquiries and disengagement. This could result in greater, as of yet unquantified costs to HC service delivery.
- d. Different areas need to participate at different times leading to potential risk of confusion, reduced participation rates and increased HC resource to field questions and resolve public uncertainty. Additional resource requirements have been estimated within the provided business case in consultation with customer services.
- e. Participation rates – a partial roll out could result in public disengagement through uncertainty of requirement to use the service and confusion, leading to reduced participation and therefore longer-term impact on collecting less food waste resulting in increased waste management costs overall.
- f. The phased approach will result in legislative compliance later than the County wide approach unless the County wide implementation approach was introduced at the same time as the fourth and final tranche of the phased approach.
- g. Commercial waste – due to the elongated roll-out and the assumption that further commercial food waste growth will not be achieved until full household food waste collections are achieved, phased roll-out will result in lower revenue and potentially lower uptake of this service through migration to other providers.
- h. Due to the variability of local road infrastructure (particularly narrow lanes and urban streets), the benefit of phased roll-out could be reduced by requiring a greater number of narrow vehicles to support early rounds to manage this problem and there is greater risk of confusion amongst close neighbours and collections being missed if this is not applied.
- i. With a phased approach, disposal savings are realised later due to elongated roll-out period.

6. With feedback from FCC, the additional following implementation factors have been highlighted which will result in a greater risk for a phased approach:

- a. Vehicle maintenance and warranties – HC are liable for longer off-road ‘mothball’ costs and noted that the warranty period (12 months) would expire without significant use of the vehicles.
- b. Caddy supply and quality of product – elongated time frame means that the project is more at risk to fluctuations in costs, the increasingly volatile plastic supply chain market and that demand within the sector could result in limited supply.
- c. Caddy deliveries – phased delivery potentially results in higher costs – Current costs are estimates rather than quotation, and the contractor noted specific risk in sourcing an appropriate contractor to meet the more elongated phased mobilisation model. The business case included provision of an additional £1 per household for delivery in an effort to address the risk.

- d. Mobilisation period is significantly elongated, increasing the resource burden on both HC and FCC, as well as potentially resulting in lower efficiency staff usage. This has been reflected within the costs within the business model as illustrated in appendix B.
 - e. The phased approach will result in a delay to achieving business-as-usual service and the efficiencies that are associated with it, resulting in further difficult to estimate costs.
7. From the financial models for each option, the following key information highlights the benefit of the countywide implementation approach over the phased approach:
- a. As per the comparison of all costs provided in Appendix B, the County wide implementation provides a cost reduction of £370k (aggregated revenue and capital costs) across the first three financial years of service (2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29).
 - b. The modelling for the phased approach shows significantly higher mobilisation costs of £421k largely through higher contractor mobilisation costs, higher HC mobilisation costs and additional container delivery costs, alongside reduced disposal savings. The mobilisation costs include consideration for additional communications, additional resource to manage the elongated roll-out and increased FCC costs for the greater duration of interim services before achieving full-service capability.
8. From Stage A, it is concluded that a phased approach does not offer adequate value to HC. A phased approach also delays our legislative compliance since full rollout is not achieved until the last tranche of collections commences, and does not compare favourably across the other key factors considered above.

Stage B:

9. Stage A identified that the most optimal and cost-effective implementation is through the County wide approach. For stage B – comparison of the County wide commencement date, it is clear that a later implementation will result in some lower costs as we would be delaying the delivery of a net expenditure service. However, there are many non-financial factors that need to be considered in determining appropriate timescales for implementation of food waste collections:
- a. Legislative - HC are already implementing household food waste collection later than the legislative obligation timeframe of 31 March 2026. Every month that this is further delayed increases risk of challenge which could have both financial impacts and reputational implications.
 - b. Environmental – Food waste collections are a key part of the UK governments environmental strategy and local authorities have a statutory duty under Section 57 (8) of the Environment Act 2021, and a responsibility under the updated Simpler Recycling guidance to provide a weekly food waste collection from 31 March 2026. Separation of household food waste from the residual waste stream and treating it via anaerobic digestion results in both material recycling and high efficiency energy recovery. It also provides a biofertilizer which retains the essential nutrients to be used to grow further crops.
 - c. Operational – the time of year changes pressure on existing services due to school holidays, cyclical seasonal increases in waste etc.
 - d. Political – Local elections are due to take place in May 2027.

- e. Public behaviour - Certain behaviours such as recycling and specific nuances related to food waste participation in both the initial and longer term are known to be easier to embed at specific times of the year.
 - f. Supply Chain / Market – Implementation at the same time as other local and national councils can result in supply chain restrictions and either delays or cost increases for key products / infrastructure and challenges in recruitment.
 - g. Commercial Food waste – The current commercial food waste service is expected to be operating at maximum efficiency by September this year, and further commercial food waste growth will not be achieved until household food waste collections are achieved. The implication of delaying household food waste collections is not only that we will not be able to fulfil our statutory duty to collect segregated commercial food waste if requested by a business to do so, but we will lose this revenue and because all businesses have a statutory duty to dispose of food waste separately from April 2027, there could be potentially lower uptake of our service in the future through increased likelihood of migration to alternative service providers.
 - h. Disposal costs – Food waste being included in the residual waste stream currently results in greater disposal costs than diverting food waste to anaerobic digestion.
10. In addition to these direct factors, there is an opportunity for enhanced round optimisation to be implemented ahead of the food waste collection service if an appropriate time duration can be made available in advance of food waste collections commencing. The contractor has highlighted that HCs waste collection rounds would benefit from a re-design to enable a more efficient service (for all household waste collections services). Specific benefits that would be realised through this round optimisation are greater service efficiency, a more robust service with reduced likelihood of missed collections and guarantees that householders will have all waste streams collected on the same day (excluding garden waste subscriptions). This will also take into account, further development of the commercial food waste service and planned housing growth.
11. Taking these considerations into account and attempting to find the best balance of all factors, the recommended commencement period for household food waste collection is September / October 2027. The primary justifications for this time frame are:
- a. Round development - This would enable the detailed round development as described above to be completed to an appropriate standard with time for software testing, implementation, snagging and optimisation. An earlier date would mean that this critical precursor could not be completed.
 - b. Public behaviour - Certain behaviours such as recycling and specific nuances related to food waste participation in both the initial and longer term are known to be easier to embed at specific times of the year. This timescale:
 - i. Reduces the perceived risk of smells/pests as a barrier to initial participation due to the introduction just prior to the colder seasons. This will allow households to familiarise and develop food waste recycling habits and behaviours without the perception of issue and therefore it is more likely that this will be embedded as a part of normal routines over time.
 - ii. Avoiding July/August summer holiday period and the run up to the festive season, would help to mitigate known risks around implementing behavioural change during holiday seasons where residents are known to spend large periods of time outside of their normal routine.

- iii. There are also known season increases in food waste on the months before the festive period and therefore introduction in advance of this means that this increase in food waste tonnages will be captured.
- c. Environmental – sustained participation in food waste collections is key to realising long term environmental benefits. This timescale increases the likelihood of participation both in the initial and longer-term due to habit formation as described above.
- d. Operationally, September provides the most appropriate balance as:
 - i. This avoids the July/August summer holiday period and the run up to the festive season, thereby reducing challenges around resourcing for both the contractor and HC.
 - ii. This period ensures that collection staff can commence and familiarise with routes during days with longer daylight hours which is important for:
 - 1. Round familiarisation - this is a key factor in introducing successful collections and reduction of missed collections especially with the mixed infrastructure within the county of Herefordshire of both urban and more narrow challenging roads.
 - 2. Familiarising with where householders put their caddy for collection - a unique challenge of food waste collections is the smaller size of the caddies and potential for missed collection.
- e. Supply chain risks are minimised by offsetting the typical commencement period by approximately half a year.
- f. This period provides an optimal balance considering the funding challenges against the need to implement the household food waste at the earliest point and considering the round development which is a key dependency.
- g. Political - This avoids the May elections and provides a settlement period.
- h. Commercial Food waste service expansion – Greater expansion is dependent on the implementation of household food waste collections. This timescale allows both household and commercial food waste services to be planned adequately. HC can offer an advanced opt in system so that businesses can plan to have this additional council service in place alongside their existing commercial service which lowers the risk of migration to other providers.
- i. Disposal cost reduction - Food waste being included in the residual waste stream currently results in greater disposal costs than diverting food waste to anaerobic digestion. As defined above, September provides the most appropriate balance to maximise collection of food waste tonnages through increasing the likelihood of initial and longer-term participation by householders, supporting our contractor to carry out round development as an important precursor before any further services are added, allows time for operational teams to recruit and provide a robust and sustainable service to households. It also allows a good timescale for HC to build detailed comms campaigns and supporting IT infrastructure.

12. In summary, a commencement date of September/October 2027 provides the optimal balance between operational readiness, financial sustainability, resident participation and long-term service success. Details of the costs associated with this implementation date are provided in Appendix B.

Document is Restricted



Appendix C: Food Waste Collection Implementation FAQs

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 30 July 2026

Report by: Cabinet member for Culture and Environment

Introduction of a food waste collection service to households across Herefordshire.

Why are we introducing the service.

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Governments Simpler Recycling guidelines, all local authorities are required to provide a weekly food waste collection service from 31 March 2026.

Introducing the service will also help Herefordshire Council achieve progress towards our waste strategy targets to:

- Reduce residual household waste arisings to less than 330kg /household/year by 2035.
- Achieve national municipal reuse and recycling rate targets of 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035.

Frequency of collections

- Food waste will be collected on a weekly basis using a new fleet of specialist food waste collection vehicles.

Caddies & liners

Households will be provided with:

- A 7-litre kitchen caddy to collect food waste in their kitchen.
- A 23-litre outdoor caddy with lockable lid to put out for collection.
- An initial roll of compostable liners will be delivered with the caddies to encourage use of the service. Households will then need to purchase their own liners should they choose to use them.

The exact type and colour of the kitchen & outdoor caddy will be determined during mobilisation. Details of the service provided to flats is described below.

Collection Day, Time & Location

- Collections will take place on the same days as the rubbish/recycling.
- Collections will take place from existing collection locations. Where a household receives an assisted collection, crews will collect from the approved location on the property.
- Collection will take place from 6:30am.

Will other services change?

There are no changes to general waste, recycling or garden waste collections.

How is the food waste being processed following collection?

Separation of household food waste from the residual waste stream and treating it via anaerobic digestion results in both material recycling and high efficiency energy recovery.

Bulking facilities will be installed at the Rotherwas transfer station, allowing for efficient transfer of food waste to a local anaerobic digestion (AD) facility for processing.

The anaerobic digestion process uses microorganisms to break down the food waste in an enclosed system. The results generate a biogas which in turn is used to generate electricity.

It also provides a biofertilizer which retains the essential nutrients to be used to grow further crops. Digestate resulting from the anaerobic digestion process shall not be used within either the River Wye or River Lugg catchment areas.

Container Deliveries

The approach to container delivery will be finalised during the service mobilisation period. A County wide mobilisation would see containers delivered to all suitable properties across Herefordshire in one tranche prior to the service commencing.

Should the phased mobilisation option be chosen, deliveries will be completed to the designated properties in that phase prior to the collections commencing.

Each property will be delivered:

- A 7-litre kitchen caddy to collect food waste in the kitchen.
- A roll of compostable 52 liners to line the kitchen caddy.
- A 23-litre outdoor caddy (with lockable lid) that will be put out for collection.
- A service information leaflet.

Deliveries will be made to a same location inside the boundary of each property and residents will not need to be home to accept the items.

Dedicated forms will be created for customer services and the website to allow households to report any delivery issues.

Do households have to take part.

We are legally required to provide a service to every suitable property in Herefordshire, and therefore will be delivering the required caddies, liners and information to every suitable property. We will be encouraging all households to use the service.

Should a household not want to use the service, we will require the caddies to remain at the resident's property and will not be removing them. This will ensure that the household can use the service in future should they choose to or the service can be used by any new resident moving into the property.

In addition, this reduces the complexities associated with bespoke deliveries and extra collections which would not provide value for money. This will be applicable for all properties with the exception of those identified as part of the opt in service.

Communication Plans.

The communication approach will use a range of channels, including the council website, social media, local press and direct communication. Councillors & Local Councils will be updated throughout the process.

A robust communication plan is being developed, to cover the service introduction. The plan will take place over 4 phases:

- Pre-service launch – Communications to raise awareness of the introduction of the food waste service.
- Container Delivery – Households will receive a direct communication to their property in advance of deliveries starting. A leaflet explaining how to use the service and when collections will start will be delivered to every property alongside the household caddies.

- Service Start – Communications to inform resident of when they can start to use the service and when the collection will begin.
- Post service Launch – Communications to remind households that the service has started and to encourage participation.

The communication approach will use a range of channels, including the council website, social media, local press and direct communication. Should the phased mobilisation option be chosen, the approach outlined above will be repeated in advance of each delivery and collection phase.

What can be collected in the food waste service.

We will be able to collect (without packaging):

- All uneaten food, scraps and leftovers
- All meat, fish and bones (raw and cooked)
- Dairy products (cheese, eggs, yoghurt)
- Fruit and vegetables
- Bread, rice, pasta
- Tea bags and coffee grounds
- Pet food
- Food peelings, nut shells and fruit stones
- Mouldy or out-of-date food

We cannot collect any caddy that includes:

- Packaging of any kind
- Liquids (milk, oil, fat)
- Garden waste or flowers
- Compostable products (except caddy liners)
- Animal waste or bedding

Replacement caddies & compostable liners

Caddies

It is our intention to not charge households for the replacement of external food waste caddies should they go missing or be damaged, to remove any financial barrier to service participation.

Replacement Liners

A roll of 52 compostable liners will be delivered to a property with the caddies. Once this roll has been used no additional liners will be provided.

An initial cost assessment across seven high street suppliers estimated the average cost to householders to be £9.68 per year (assuming 7-10 litre compostable liners at a usage rate of two per week)

Service users can purchase compostable caddy liners from most supermarkets should they choose to use them. Communications will include information on suitable liners such as those with the European standard BS EN 13432 or the 'seedling' logo and paper liners.



Our website will also include additional advice on good practice should liners not be used.

How will households report issues.

Our website, customer service team and web forms will all be updated to incorporate the food waste collection service.

Will the service be provided to flats.

The Waste Management Team have actively been assessing flats across Herefordshire. Where they have identified that flats are suitable to receive a caddy-based service like standard street level residential properties, residents of those flats will be given the opportunity to opt in to the food waste service.

Where the team have identified that a communal service is required, the service introduction will take place at a later date. Service introduction at these properties is more complex and requires careful planning of space, access, and collection arrangements with all stakeholders. The business model includes provision for an initial trial to help define the most appropriate methodology.

What about reducing food waste

We will still actively encourage our households to reduce food waste wherever possible.

What about households who perceive issues with pests and smells:

Appropriate advice will be provided to households in regard to reducing the chances of pests within their waste. The collections are designed to commence moving into the less problematic months, enabling households to adopt appropriate food waste management behaviours.

Will a service be available for business customers.

A commercial food waste collection service has been provided by Herefordshire Council since April 2025. From April 2027 Simpler recycling legislation will require all business to have a food waste collection service. To meet the additional demand the commercial waste collection service was expanded in June 2026 to run 5 days a week.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Service Area/Directorate

Name of Head of Service for activity being assessed: Gemma Dando

Directorate: Economy and Environment

Name of lead person for this activity: Nicola Percival

Individual(s) completing this assessment: Nicola Percival

Date assessment completed: 22 June 2026

2. What is being assessed

Activity being assessed (eg. policy, procedure, budget, service redesign, strategy etc.)

A change to the waste services so that food waste is diverted from residual bins and into a new food waste collection service

What is the aim, purpose, or intended outcome of this activity?

To identify and mitigate against any unintended impacts of the diversion of food waste collection service upon those within identified equality groups

Who will be affected by the development and implementation of this activity?

☒ Service users	☐ Visitors to the county
☐ Communities	☐ Carers
☐ Children	☐ Patients
☐ All staff	☐ All part-time staff
☐ Staff at a particular location	☐ Other:

Is this:

- ☒ Review of an existing activity/policy
- ☐ New activity/policy
- ☐ Planning to withdraw or reduce a service, activity or presence?

3. Background information and findings

What information and evidence have you reviewed to help inform this assessment? (name your sources, eg. demographic information, usage data, Census data, feedback, complaints, audits, research)

Environment Act 2021
DEFRA Policy Paper Simpler Recycling in England: policy update November 2024
Assisted collections for individual residents registered for the waste collection service.
Review of non-standard properties (flats) carried out during 2025/26 by the Waste Management team.

Summary of engagement or consultation undertaken (eg. who you've engaged with, and how, or why do you believe this is not required)

Between December 2020 and February 2021 MEL Research undertook a public consultation exercise on the two proposed collection service options, both of which included the separation of food waste to allow segregated collections.

The consultation was promoted on the council website, social media pages, print media publications and emails were sent to a representative sample of residents with telephone surveys and postal surveys also available. Trade and non-trade waste customers were sent an email to take part in the business survey.

Through the consultation residents told us that “more needs to be done to reduce rubbish and increase recycling (86% agreed with this) and that they “accept the need to change the current rubbish and recycling system” (60% agreed with this). Specifically, 56% of residents said that they would use a separate food waste collection service. Just over a third of residents did have concerns about hygiene and attracting pests. In listening to these concerns it is proposed to provide residents with liners for the food caddies and clear information on how to prevent problems with pests. Just under a fifth of residents felt they would not want to use the proposed separate food waste service because they did not produce enough food waste.

Summary of relevant findings (it is possible that you will have gaps in your evidence. You must decide whether you need to fill in the gaps now, and if it is feasible to do so. It might be that collecting robust information forms part of your action plan below)

Legal duty

Herefordshire Council has a statutory duty to introduce weekly food waste collections under Section 57 (8) of the Environment Act 2021 and a new responsibility under the updated Simpler Recycling policy November 2024.

Assisted collections

There are just over 1200 registered assisted collections for individual residents.

Non-standard properties

There are roughly 6000 household properties which will require a different approach to the implementation of food waste collections. Where flats are suitable to receive a caddy-based service, like standard street level residential properties, resident of those flats will be given the opportunity to opt in to the service from the start of the service. This is to ensure that caddies are not delivered and left out on the streets (e.g. for flats above shops) as the person that has requested the service will expect delivery and take them into the property.

Where it has been identified that a shared communal service is required, the service introduction will take place at a later date.

It is known that some of the identified flats will be solely for older people and some will be for people with learning difficulties or disabilities. Service introductions at these properties are more complex and therefore will be planned working together with all stakeholders.

4. The Public Sector Equality Duty

Will this activity have a positive, neutral or negative impact on our duty to:

Equality Duty	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation?	☐	☒	☐
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups?	☐	☒	☐
Foster good relations between different groups?	☐	☒	☐

Explain your rationale here, and include any ways in which you could strengthen the capacity of this activity to promote equality (remember to add anything relevant into your action planning below)

5. The impact of this activity

Consider the potential impact of this activity on each of the equality groups outlined below and explain your rationale. Please note it is possible for the potential impact to be both positive and negative within the same equality group. Remember to consider the impact on staff and service users (current and potential) and partner organisations. It may be useful to include data within these sections if you know the diversity make-up of the people likely to be affected.

Equality Group	Potential <u>positive</u> impact	Potential <u>neutral</u> impact	Potential <u>negative</u> impact	Rationale
Age (include safeguarding, consent and child welfare)	☒	☒	☒	Some elderly people who managed ok to place out just 1 container may struggle with the additional food container each week as well, especially if they currently bring the container some distance down a lane. The food caddy is only 23 litres and has a carry handle so could be easier to move/carry than a wheeled bin for some people. Using the food caddy will reduce the weight of black general rubbish bins each week if used for the food waste. Anyone with memory difficulties may find the introduction of a new service difficult to remember to use or to put the food caddy out for collection.
Disability (consider attitudinal, physical, financial and social barriers, neuro-diversity, learning disability, physical and sensory impairment)	☒	☐	☒	More segregation could negatively impact anyone with memory problems. It could provide more capacity in the general waste bin for anyone who creates more rubbish due to a medical condition as a result of a disability. Blind or partially sighted people may find the small containers placed incorrectly for collection to be a trip hazard. Equally, those who use wheelchairs could find footpaths blocked if containers are placed incorrectly.
Gender Reassignment (include gender identity, and consider privacy of data and harassment)	☐	☒	☐	
Marriage & Civil Partnerships	☐	☒	☐	
Pregnancy & Maternity (consider working arrangements, part-time working, infant caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☐	It could provide more capacity in the general waste bin for anyone who has children with nappies.
Race (including Travelling Communities and people of other nationalities)	☐	☒	☐	
Religion & Belief	☐	☒	☐	
Sex (consider issues of safety, sexual violence, part-time work, and single-sex provision – especially in light of the legal definition of “sex”)	☐	☒	☐	
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	☐	

Equality Group	Potential positive impact	Potential neutral impact	Potential negative impact	Rationale
Others: carers, care leavers, homeless, social/ economic deprivation (consider shift-patterns, caring responsibilities)	☒	☐	☒	The requirement to segregate an additional waste stream could be negative for anyone providing care as it will be an additional responsibility. However, it could be positive if the person being cared for creates additional waste which they struggle to fit into the general waste bin as it will free up some capacity. For anyone living in a flat with limited outside space it could be positive as will allow the food waste to be collected weekly. This is often the waste which causes the most smell if stored for too long awaiting a fortnightly collection.
Health Inequalities (any preventable, unfair & unjust differences in health status between groups, populations or individuals that arise from unequal distribution of social, environmental & economic conditions)	☒	☐	☒	OCD or other mental health conditions that relate to cleanliness may cause a negative impact but it could equally be positive as will allow the food waste to be collected weekly. This is often the waste which causes the most smell if stored for too long awaiting a fortnightly collection.

Where a negative impact on any of the equality groups is realised after the implementation of the activity, the activity lead will seek to minimise the impact and carry out a full review of this EIA.

6. Action planning

What actions will you take as a result of this impact assessment? (you will need to include actions to mitigate any potential negative impacts)

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
Difficult to carry 2 containers out for collection	Assisted collections will continue to be offered as they are now. Communications information will make it clear that this assisted service will continue for those who require it and will be available for anyone who needs it as a result of the new service.	CC	As communications are developed.
Difficult remembering to use or put container out for collection	Collections are weekly so less complicated to remember than the alternate weekly and recycling collection weeks. Simple information will be provided before the caddy deliveries start and simple instructions will be provided with the delivery of the caddy regarding collection day. Additional customer services and waste management team staff will be employed to help answer queries for a period of time before and after service implementation.	CC	Will be built into the project plan for implementation.

Potential negative impact	What action will be taken	Who will lead	Timeframe
Trip hazard or blocked pavements/entrances	Collections will take place from the same location as everyone currently places out their rubbish/recycling and will take place on the same day. Clear communications instructions will be provided to all residents regarding the correct placement for containers. All new collection crews will receive full training regarding the placement of caddies back within the boundary of the property so as not to create an obstruction or hazard. Caddies for flats above shops will only be provided to residents who opt into the service to ensure that the caddies are taken in upon delivery. This will also help to ensure that the person who requested the service uses it correctly and will provide contact details for residents who have requested the service so that the waste management team can get in touch directly if there are any problems.	CC / GW	Will be built into the project plan for implementation.
Perception of the service as not clean	Caddy liners will be delivered with the caddies. FAQs will be produced that provide details on how to correctly use the service, how to prevent smell and do some myth busting regarding other pests that people often associate with food waste collections.	CC GW	Will be built into the project plan for implementation.

7. Monitoring and review

How will you monitor these actions?

All actions will be built into the project plan. For assisted collections, this is a service managed by the waste management team so this will continue.

Issues which arise following implementation of the service, for example, incorrectly placed caddies, the additional resource built into the waste management team will allow both pro-active monitoring of collection crews and reactive action if reported by a member of the public.

When will you review this EIA?

This is relating to the change in service therefore will only be reviewed if an impact is identified which wasn't considered as part of this review.

8. Equality Statement

- All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect of their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in decision-making, policies, services, procurement, staff recruitment and management.

- Herefordshire Council will challenge discrimination, promote equality, respect human rights, and design and implement services, policies and measures that meet the diverse needs of our population, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

Signature of person completing EIA

N. Percival

Date signed

22.6.26



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Policy paper

Simpler Recycling in England: policy update

Published 29 November 2024

Applies to England

Contents

Ministerial foreword

New default requirements

Supporting our circular economy strategy

Timelines

Updated position on co-collection of recyclable waste streams

Confirmed position on timeline for micro-firms implementation

Guidance on residual waste collections

Next steps



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update/simpler-recycling-in-england-policy-update>

Ministerial foreword

For too long, households in England have been presented with a muddled and confusing patchwork of approaches to bin collections. This policy statement sets out the government's approach to delivering Simpler Recycling in England, subject to spending review outcomes.

This government inherited legislation that could have required households to have up to 7 bins, placing an unnecessary burden on people and businesses. We are simplifying the rules to make recycling easier for people in England, while stimulating growth and maximising environmental benefits.

Simpler Recycling will enable consistent, more streamlined collections from all households, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises (such as schools and hospitals).

Local authorities and other waste collectors will be able to co-collect some waste streams by default meaning that they will no longer need to collect 7 separate streams.

These common-sense changes will not lead to the proliferation of bins but will ensure the same set of materials are collected everywhere in England.

New default requirements

The new default requirement for most households and workplaces will be 4 containers for:

- residual (non-recyclable) waste
- food waste (mixed with garden waste if appropriate)
- paper and card
- all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass)

These may be various container types, including bags, bins or stackable boxes.

This is the government's maximum default requirement and is not expected to increase in the future. However, councils and other waste collectors will still have the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need. This is a sensible, pragmatic approach to the collection of materials for every household and business in England.

We will make recycling easier: citizens will be able to recycle the same materials across England whether at home, work or school, and will no longer need to check what is accepted for recycling in their local area. A universal standard will ensure that everything that can be collected for household recycling is collected in every region.

Simpler Recycling will also end the 'postcode lottery' of bin collections in England whereby councils collect different materials for recycling, causing confusion for households. We will maintain flexibility for local authorities to deliver these changes in the most appropriate way for their area. We have published guidance for local authorities and other waste collectors (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/collecting-paper-and-card-with-other-dry-recyclable-materials-written-assessments>) to support their decision-making regarding the co-collection of paper and card with other dry recyclable materials.

Through Simpler Recycling, all householders will receive a comprehensive and consistent set of waste and recycling services. This will enable householders to recycle as much waste as possible and to frequently dispose of bad-smelling food waste, which will be collected from all households at least weekly.

We recognise that as recycling services are expanded and improved, local authorities may want to review residual waste services to ensure they are providing best value for money in line with local need. The government's priority is ensuring that households' needs are met, and we expect local authorities to continue to provide services to a reasonable standard, as they do now. Defra has published guidance on household waste collections (<http://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-good-waste-collection-services-for-households>) to ensure that local authorities consider certain factors when they review services, to ensure that reasonable standards are maintained.

The government will progress the delivery of this policy, providing clarity to enable investment in UK recycling and a substantial contribution to emissions savings for the waste sector. This policy statement sets out the government's position on several exemptions, which will be implemented by an affirmative statutory instrument (SI) in December 2024. The timing of this statement ahead of that SI is to provide more time for businesses and local authorities to prepare.

Supporting our circular economy strategy

The government is committed to moving towards a zero waste, circular economy. This will create a future where:

- we keep our resources in use for longer and reduce waste
- we accelerate the path to net zero
- we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs
- our economy prospers
- nature thrives

To do this we are building a circular economy strategy and a series of sector-based roadmaps for reform. This will include a long-term roadmap for the packaging sector.

Simpler Recycling in England will be an essential part of this mission. Alongside Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging-who-is-affected-and-what-to-do>) and the Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/introduction-of-a-deposit-return-scheme-in-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>), Simpler Recycling will make a significant step towards meeting our ambition to recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035, and deliver greenhouse gas emissions savings equivalent to £11.8 billion ^[footnote 1].

These reforms will reduce confusion, ending the ‘postcode lottery’ of bin collections, which will help ensure the correct materials are captured for recycling.

This will improve recycling rates – household recycling rates in England have flatlined at around 44% to 45% since 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-waste-data/uk-statistics-on-waste>). This policy will play a critical role in delivering emissions savings for the waste sector in Carbon Budgets 4 to 6.

Simpler Recycling aims to ensure there is more recycled material in the products we buy, and that high quality recycled material can be sourced domestically, enabling packaging circularity in the UK. It will help to support more than £10 billion investment in the UK’s recycling capability over the next decade (<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgreenbusinessjournal.co.uk%2Frecycling-and-waste-management-sector-to-invest-10bn-in-achieving-net-zero-by->

Timelines

The government will deliver these reforms to previously announced timelines, subject to the outcomes of the forthcoming Spending Review.

The implementation timelines for Simpler Recycling are as previously announced:

- by 31 March 2025, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises ^[footnote 2] in England will need to arrange for the collection of the core recyclable waste streams, with the exception of garden waste (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and food waste)
- micro-firms (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) will be temporarily exempt from this requirement. They will have until 31 March 2027 to arrange for recycling of core recyclable waste streams
- by 31 March 2026, local authorities will be required to collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England. This includes introducing weekly food waste collections for most homes, unless a transitional arrangement applies ^[footnote 3]
- by 31 March 2027, kerbside plastic film collections from businesses and relevant non-domestic premises, and households will be introduced

Secondary legislation implementing the policy updates will be laid in December 2024, subject to parliamentary process.

We will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, relevant non-domestic premises, the waste industry and producers to support implementation.

Updated position on co-collection of recyclable waste streams

Co-collecting food and garden waste

To maximise flexibility for local authorities and households, we are introducing an exemption to allow the co-collection of food and garden waste. There is no evidence that this would affect their ability to be recycled or composted, since the materials can always be processed through in-vessel composting when mixed.

Co-collecting dry materials

Stakeholder evidence

We have received extensive stakeholder feedback and evidence about plans on the collection of dry materials. The Secretary of State for Defra has concluded, based on the evidence, that:

- there is some evidence to indicate that simplifying the number of bins can help increase participation in recycling, but evidence also suggests that fully co-collecting systems (with one mixed dry recycling bin) have the highest levels of contamination (for example, broken glass stuck on paper or soggy paper from the liquid from bottles and cans), which will affect the recycling rate
- contaminated materials may be rejected after collection if it is not economically viable to re-process them, reducing the amount of material recycled
- paper and card are particularly vulnerable to cross-contamination from food and liquid commonly found on other recycling, which can significantly reduce quality of collected material

Our plan for co-collecting dry materials

Based on this evidence, the Secretary of State for Defra understands that co-collection of plastic, metal and glass presents a lower contamination and material quality risk. The Secretary of State for Defra has concluded that:

- by default, paper and card should be separately collected from all other dry materials so their potential to be recycled is not reduced. According to the latest data from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), 121 local authorities reported that they already collect paper and card separately from other dry recycling across England ^[footnote 4]
- all other dry materials may be co-collected, as the benefit of simplifying (and thereby potential to increase volumes), offsets the smaller contamination risk. According to the latest WRAP data, 95 local councils

already co-collect plastic, metal and glass in this way across England
[\[footnote 5\]](#)

- local flexibility to co-collect paper and card with other dry materials remains where separate collection is technically or economically impracticable, or provides no significant environmental benefit. For example, this may be more appropriate for high-rise flats or houses with very limited outside space. Waste collectors will need to produce a short written assessment explaining their decision. [Guidance for waste collectors and a template \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/collecting-paper-and-card-with-other-dry-recyclable-materials-written-assessments\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/collecting-paper-and-card-with-other-dry-recyclable-materials-written-assessments) that can be used for this assessment has been published alongside this announcement
- if local authorities and other waste collectors want to offer more separate containers for different types of materials, they will be able to do so without completing a written assessment. In 2022 to 2023, around 41 local authorities in England reported that they currently choose to collect dry materials in more than 2 separate waste containers [\[footnote 6\]](#)

This draws on learning from best practice across the UK and internationally. For instance, in Wales, the Collections Blueprint sets out a default standard of 3 dry recycling containers. The 2015 review concluded that the separate collections system results in ‘higher-quality, less contaminated material’, which ‘results in a higher likelihood of material being appropriate for higher value-added closed-loop uses in the UK and Europe [\[footnote 7\]](#). England’s household recycling rate was 44.1% in 2021 [\[footnote 8\]](#), so there is significant room for improvement.

This evidence-based pragmatic approach will provide a suitable balance to support environmental outcomes while providing local flexibility and convenience for households.

Confirmed position on timeline for micro-firms implementation

We will proceed with the exemption which means that micro-firms will have until 31 March 2027 to comply with requirements. This provides a realistic timeline for those businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees to make the necessary changes. We recognise there are challenges to these businesses to transition. We will provide advice and support to assist them in complying with the requirements.

Guidance on residual waste collections

As householders will receive comprehensive and consistent recycling services through Simpler Recycling, we expect residual waste amounts to decrease.

Local authorities are already legally required to deliver waste collection services to all households in their area. We have gone further by mandating weekly food waste collections under the Environment Act 2021. Waste collection authorities determine the appropriate approach to residual waste and dry recycling collections in their area.

The government's priority is ensuring households' needs are met with regard to the provision of residual waste and recycling services, so we are writing guidance to support local authorities in making these decisions.

We have published non-statutory guidance for local authorities on factors to consider, within their existing and new legal obligations, to ensure they continue to provide reasonable waste collection services to households, as they currently do.

The guidance on household waste collections

(<http://www.gov.uk/guidance/ensuring-good-waste-collection-services-for-households>) advises local authorities to ensure the following outcomes:

- households receive reasonable residual waste collections (local authorities should consider additional services for particular needs, such as households with medical needs)
- there will be no build-up of bad-smelling waste at kerbside
- changes to collections do not lead to an increase in fly-tipping of residual waste

We expect local authorities to monitor any changes to collection frequencies to ensure there are no unintended adverse consequences.

Next steps

Policies relating to exemptions from the existing legislation are subject to parliamentary approval.

Key upcoming milestones for Simpler Recycling:

- December 2024: lay regulations to confirm exemptions in legislation, subject to parliamentary procedure
- by end of financial year 2024 to 2025: delivery of transitional resource new burdens funding to local authorities for weekly food waste collections for households

Following this announcement, we will work with the sector and provide further guidance and tools to support preparation for Simpler Recycling implementation dates, with a particular focus on the 31 March 2025 deadline for businesses and relevant non-domestic premises.

-
1. Simpler Recycling in England (legislation.gov.uk)
(https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/97/pdfs/ukia_20240097_en.pdf), figure is discounted and in 2023 price base year
 2. Relevant non-domestic premises include residential homes, premises forming part of a university or school or other educational establishment, premises forming part of a hospital or nursing home, and premises of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State.
 3. Where long-term waste disposal (mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste) contracts present a barrier to introducing separate food waste collections, a longer implementation period may be required. Defra will continue to engage with affected local authorities.
 4. WRAP LA portal data as at September 2024. This is local authority reported data.
 5. WRAP LA portal data as at September 2024. This is local authority reported data.
 6. WRAP LA data for 2022/23. This is local authority reported data.
 7. Review of the Welsh Government Collections Blueprint – Eunomia Research and Consulting (<https://eunomia.eco/reports/review-of-the-welsh-government-collections-blueprint/>)
 8. UK statistics on waste - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-waste-data/uk-statistics-on-waste))
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-waste-data/uk-statistics-on-waste>)





All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



[© Crown copyright](#)