

MEETING:	COUNCIL
MEETING DATE:	19 JULY 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	LEADER'S REPORT
REPORT BY:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. Classification

Open.

2. Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

3. Wards Affected

County-wide.

4. Purpose

To receive a report from the Leader on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in March.

5. Recommendation

THAT: the report be noted.

6. Alternative Options

6.1 There are no alternative options; it is a requirement of the council's constitution.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 To ensure members are aware of the activities of Cabinet.

8. Key Considerations

8.1 A list of the decisions taken by the executive since the meeting of Council on 8 March is provided at appendix A; none were dealt with under the urgency provisions within the constitution.

8.2 Colleagues across the council will of course be fully aware of the considerable financial challenges the council faces, having already made budget reductions of £21 million over the last two years, with a further £32 million required in the period to 2016/17 and this at a time when we know demand for services for older people will rise in line with the aging population. The spending review announcement made by the Chancellor in June has confirmed that the pressure to reduce revenue funding to local government will continue for the foreseeable future.

- 8.3 We cannot continue to support the range of services and activities that we have done to date at the same level and at the same time deliver the things Herefordshire residents tell us are most importance to them – keeping our children and vulnerable adults safe, and ensuring there is a successful economy so that people have good jobs and housing. The extraordinary meeting of Council in May saw the broad service areas where we expect there to be the most significant cost reductions. Where those cost reductions can be progressed by officers as part of day to day operational management that is being done; where executive decisions are required Cabinet is working through options for how those cost reductions can be achieved, and as far as is possible, how the impacts on those who use those services can be minimised. We are committed to engaging with service users and other stakeholders as part of this process to ensure that we reach fair, evidence based decisions.
- 8.4 It would be wrong to think that these services have been identified as areas where cost reductions should be made either because they are not valued or wanted by the community, or because reducing council funding will have no impact on those services. The simple truth is that councils across the country have to focus the resources that remain available to them on a smaller range of core community services. For those service areas where we will have to take the difficult decision to reduce or remove council funding, we will take every opportunity there is in the time available to us to work with local communities and partners to consider other ways in which those services can be delivered or supported. However it is an inescapable fact that the longer we take to make these decisions, the greater the amount of money to be found – putting at risk more services and jobs. We will therefore bring forward detailed proposals for delivering those necessary service reductions at the earliest opportunity during the coming months, and will keep the executive rolling programme updated regarding the anticipated timing of those decisions.
- 8.5 Alongside taking the actions needed to deliver a balanced budget this year, we have been reviewing the shape of the council and its core functions for the future. Cabinet Members, working with Group Leaders and the chairmen of our two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, will be using the strong evidence base provided by *Understanding Herefordshire* to begin to formulate proposals for a refreshed Corporate Plan which we expect to be proposing to Council in December, to inform the future budget strategy.

9. Community Impact

- 9.1 The community impact of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

10. Equality and Human Rights

- 10.1 Cabinet have paid due regard to the public sector equality duty in their decision-making as set out in the relevant decision reports.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 The financial implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 The legal implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

13. Risk Management

13.1 The risks associated with any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

14. Consultees

14.1 None

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix A – Executive Decisions.

16. Background Papers

16.1 None identified.