

Summary of outputs from the cross party sessions.

At its meeting on in May 2013 Herefordshire Council resolved

As part of the budget setting process for 2014/15 that Cabinet engages fully with all Members, Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Council Staff, Parish Councils, Business, the Third Sector, Residents of Herefordshire and local media to ensure a good, consistent understanding of the Councils financial position and its priorities including its income and expenditure, revenue and capital position; to enable an effective dialogue that ensures that the Council has a good understanding of peoples' priorities and those that are valued by the wider community

To begin the process of engaging fully with members a number of seminars and working groups have been meeting.

A seminar was held on 18th July 2013 involving representatives from cabinet, scrutiny and from each political group supported by senior managers.

Participants agreed:

- They were united in understanding the difficulties facing the council, particularly the need to plan for the medium term with a third less funding, with further reductions in the longer term.
- There was a need to communicate with Herefordshire residents so that these difficulties are clearly understood – and that they are not simply viewed as 'the council's problem'.
- Not to allow past political divisions to get in the way.
- There was a need to establish the conditions for a strong county economy and a wish to ensure that nothing that the council does gets in the way of economic growth. The need also to work through what the enablers for growth in Herefordshire are/will be, and to build on our strengths with an effective Local Enterprise Partnership.
- There is a need for a good, and a sustainable system for supporting vulnerable adults, where our county's communities understand the need for greater community support for those vulnerable adults, and places less reliance on the current unsustainable model where the council provides much more than it can afford.
- There is a need for a good, and a sustainable system for keeping safe and support children and young people.
- Political leaders and senior managers committed themselves to take whatever steps necessary to move to a position where the council can demonstrate it has efficient & effective systems and processes in place.
- More broadly, the need for communities to play a much bigger role – and that the councils task was to find the way to enable them to do so.

Following on from this seminar a number of smaller cross party working groups were established

There was a group focusing on each of the following areas:

- Establishing the conditions for a strong county economy
- A good sustainable system for supporting vulnerable adults;
- Children's and young people
- All other services
- The community playing a much bigger role

These groups worked to identifying the priorities within these areas, how these would be achieved and, in order to focus on those priority activities, what services the council would no longer fund, or fund less of.

A further seminar was held involving representatives from cabinet, scrutiny and from each political group supported by senior managers was held on the 25th September 2013.

This seminar concluded

Given that

- We face unprecedented cuts and huge increases in demands for our services, and
- We want to help people live safe healthy, and independent lives in supportive communities
- The Council's existing corporate plan has the aim to engender a successful economy and enable residents to be independent and lead fulfilling lives whilst operating efficiently and effectively. This remains the Council's aim

The council will focus on the following priorities

- make sure people get the (care) support they need to live as independently as they can
- keep children safe and give them a great start in life
- support local employers to provide better jobs and higher wages

To meet our priorities we will need to

- help individuals, communities and organisations do more for themselves and contribute more to their local community
- ensure the services that we provide are the most cost effective
- radically reduce the costs and level of services in other areas

There was a agreement about many aspects of our approach to meeting those priorities.

Our broad approach will be

To make sure people get the care/support they need to live as independently as they can we will:

- Work effectively with local communities, care providers and the health service to reduce people's need for social care
- Work with local care providers to make sure when people need care it is available, affordable and of high quality
- Provide better services for people in a crisis
- Provide the information people need to be able to make their own decisions

To keep children safe and give them the best start in life we can we will:

- Work harder to make sure young people are able to influence our decisions
- Work with our partners to target our work to support families so that fewer children need safeguarding
- Work with communities and organisation across Herefordshire to provide good safeguarding services by 2016
- Work with schools, colleges and early years providers to improve the education of vulnerable children

To support local employers to provide better jobs and higher wages we will:

- Invest in the infrastructure needed to enable businesses and third sector organisations to invest and grow
- Help local people get better skills
- Commission services in a way that helps the economy thrive
- Work closely with our partners in the Local Enterprise Partnership and in other areas to maximise the investment that can be brought into the county

To help more communities deliver more of their own services we will:

- Be clear about what services we will not provide in local communities
- Help communities and groups and organisations within communities make effective use of our assets and their own
- Insist that people we commission to provide services work effectively with local communities
- Target support to communities and groups and organisations within communities that really need it

To radically reduce costs in non-priority areas we will

- Radically reduce the costs and level of services not in our priority areas
- Increase the income we raise to fund our services
- Make the best use of our assets and the assets across the county
- Support individuals and communities to do more for themselves
- Get out of the way where someone else can provide the service