

Title of report: Leader's report to Council

Meeting: Council

Meeting date: Friday 5 March 2021

Report by: Leader of the Council

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To provide an update on the work of the Cabinet since the previous meeting of the Council and an annual report on the priorities of the Cabinet and progress made in meeting those priorities. A brief summary of decisions taken by the executive is provided at appendix A and all decision reports and notices are available on the council's website.

The report provides a summary of progress made against the areas of focus identified in the County Plan. More detail about the council's performance and how that is reported is available on the performance management page of the [council's website](#)

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) The report be noted.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options; the constitution requires the Leader to provide Council with reports on the activities of the executive.

Key considerations

2. I am pleased to provide to Council my Leader's report. Within the report I have set out the priorities of the cabinet and progress made in meeting the ambitions and objectives that are set out in the council's County and Delivery plans. This report covers the period from my last report, to Council for the meeting on 11 December 2020 to the date of this report.
3. As members will be all too aware the COVID 19 pandemic has continued to dominate how we all are able to live our lives and go about our daily business. In my report in March 2020, I reported on the emerging public health situation. None of us could have predicted the scale or devastation this new virus has had. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of those who have lost loved ones and to those who continue to support friends or family who may have virus.
4. The Cabinet has continued through this crisis to receive a weekly briefing from the Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health.
5. As devastating as this deadly virus has been there are clear signs that the current lockdown measures are facilitating a sustained reduction in the number of cases, both nationally and locally. At the time of drafting, the weekly rolling rate of cases per 100,000 in Herefordshire was 99.6. Many of us will have friends or family members who have now had their vaccinations. So while we must remain under current lockdown conditions, there is real hope and optimism for the future.

In the period since my last report there have been three meetings of Council.

6. At the meeting on 22nd January 2021 Council approved the appointment of the new Chief Executive, Paul Walker. I am pleased to report that Paul will be joining us from 3 May 2021. Paul is well equipped to help us to recover from Covid having co designed the West London Economic Recovery plan – a £74bn economy. He also leads the West London Green recovery delivery plan across 6 London Boroughs. Among many contributions I am hoping that he will bring his skills to the environmental and ecological emergency agenda.
7. Paul brings with him huge experience and practice of working in regeneration projects, cross council partnership working on the climate emergency and, a threat we know all too well in Herefordshire, dealing with flooding crises. I know he will bring new drive and energy and a proven ability to translate strategic visions into action and delivery on the ground. I speak at least weekly to Paul apprising him of significant developments and giving him information about the Council and its culture which will enable him to make a quick impact when he joins. I have found him very easy to communicate with and am confident that you will find his appointment to have been an excellent choice. He is having regular meetings with members of the Senior Management Team and is starting to have meetings with Cabinet Portfolio holders.
8. Until he joins we remain under the capable leadership of Claire Ward and Andrew Lovegrove as joint deputy chief executives. Claire is also acting as the Head of Paid Service with Kate Charlton taking on the role as Monitoring Officer until Paul joins us in May.
9. At the Extraordinary meeting on 2 February 2021 Council voted to abandon the Plans for the Western Bypass and the Southern Link Road. This followed a long period of

review and consultation which was appropriate for a project of such significance. The Cabinet looks forward to the alternative measures set out in the WPP report coming forward for detailed consideration.

10. At the Budget meeting on 12 February 2021 the Budget for 2021/22 was approved. There was a significant contrast between the process last year with a requirement to save over £11m in the revenue budget caused by the impact of Covid and also by significant increases in costs of social care. The Cabinet are particularly grateful for the work put into this by officers in coming up with a balanced budget.
11. Recent rains have caused further flooding to properties in the County. Such events are becoming a more regular occurrence with recent rain events in January and February this year causing further flooding across the county. Storm Christoph in January brought high river levels and significant surface water across the county. During the event a number of roads were closed across the county and nearly 60 properties were flooded as a result. Earlier this month significant rain in Wales resulted in high river levels in main rivers in Herefordshire and some flooding on roads across the county.

As the Lead Local Flood Authority, the council is responsible for coordinating flood management activities with other risk management authorities (eg Environment Agency (EA), Welsh Water). It is common for flooding to be attributable to multiple sources and not just one source and so a joint approach is often required.

We work with the EA on improving maintenance and repair of the drainage system assets and the council chairs regular meetings with Balfour Beatty Living Places and the EA for the purpose of identifying opportunities to reduce flood risk in a collaborative manner. A range of options is being considered for locations including Greyfriars, Hampton Bishop, Leintwardine/Walford.

12. Notwithstanding the ongoing public health crisis and the departure and recruitment of senior staff at the council, the Cabinet has continued to move forward in delivering the ambitions set out within our County and Delivery plans at pace. I provide details of the most significant decisions the executive have taken since my last report below in (**15 A to L**) In addition to our formal decisions, I would like the following areas to be noted for their achievement and success.

- i. **A new and consistent cross border approach to managing phosphate levels.** In December we received confirmation that our planning colleagues in Wales will deal with these issues in the same way as in England by Natural Resources Wales (the equivalent of our Environment Agency and Natural England combined). This is indeed good news for the rivers Wye and Lugg. Herefordshire Council, Natural England and the Environment Agency Officers were instrumental in achieving this through their lobbying of our Welsh colleagues through the Nutrient Management Board (NMB). NMB meetings are now assisting the local planning authorities in Powys and the Brecon Beacons on how they strengthen their mitigation of harmful phosphate levels in our locally and nationally treasured rivers.

Significant broader issues remain concerning the levels of phosphates. Here the Council is making good progress with our own integrated wetland project and we will shortly be sharing a first draft of our new phosphate calculator for comment and input from partners.

- ii. **Ofsted report rates Herefordshire primary schools as top in the West Midlands region:** In January, I was pleased to be notified that Herefordshire primary schools have been rated top in the West Midlands by Ofsted. Ofsted's annual report on children's services and skills has recognised 96% of Herefordshire's primary schools are rated as good or outstanding and found that the county also has the highest rate of improvement in the proportion of good or outstanding secondary schools in the West Midlands region. In addition, 80% of our secondary schools were rated as good or outstanding, putting Herefordshire in the top three Local Authorities in the West Midlands. Herefordshire schools came out joint top in the 2019/20 results in the West Midlands for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in key stage 2 in reading, writing and maths.
- iii. **Signs of safety roll out is underway;** the Signs of Safety workflow is live on MOSAIC, the case management system used for social care. This is a significant milestone on our implementation journey. It is a ground-breaking new initiative – Herefordshire is the first authority in the country to go live with this new suite of forms. Staff have been embracing the new workflows and coping admirably with the changes. Andy Gill, Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding Quality & Improvement is providing daily blog updates to staff on progress of the rollout. I know we all in our corporate parenting role have a shared endeavour to ensure that we provide the best possible care and safeguarding for the children in our care and it is encouraging to see this new initiative underway. We will look to provide further updates in the weeks and months ahead.
- iv. **Schools' capital investment;** the Cabinet have approved a major investment in capital premises improvements. This is a two year programme of around £3m to improve, upgrade and develop the schools premises around the county. This will allow for upgrades to fire alarms, asbestos removal, roofing and heating repairs and improvements to ventilation systems. One particular success story has been the recent completion of the expansion of Marlbrook Primary School at Green Croft. The new buildings have been completed on time and within budget meaning that we can now safely remove temporary classrooms from the site and pupils will be taught in permanent purpose built modern facilities. I offer my thanks and congratulations to the project team leading this work.
- v. **Free school meals decision;** Herefordshire Council has been awarded more than £537,000 under the Government's COVID Winter Grant scheme to ensure vulnerable individuals and families don't go hungry this winter. The scheme has been set up to provide support to vulnerable individuals and households with children, particularly affected by the pandemic throughout the winter months. The funding is available from December until the end of March 2021, and a large portion of the money will go towards providing free school meals for vulnerable children.

Families with an eligible child will receive a local supermarket voucher for the value of £75 to cover the cost of food for the two week Christmas holiday period, enabling household funds to be redirected to pay utility bills. The council's decision to continue to support the free school meals provision throughout the holidays will help to ensure that vulnerable Herefordshire families don't go hungry. Under the extended scheme primary and secondary school pupils who are entitled to benefits related free school meals will receive meal provision up

to the value of £15 to cover the cost of food for the week of the February half term holidays and up to £33 to cover meals for the longer Easter break through their schools.

- vi. **Supporting schools and settings with working under lockdown;** Schools are now involved in regular COVID testing with plans to extend this to Early Years settings. Advice and guidance is issued weekly on dealing with the pandemic and also strengthening the on line offer in schools.
- vii. **Adult social care - update for market position statement;** the market position statement is on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting on February 25th. This document is aimed at care and support providers across Herefordshire to inform them of future demand and growth and what the council's commissioning intentions will be over the next 5 years. The information is based upon research and data on previous year's trends as well as predicted numbers based on demographic changes to inform need. Its aim is to support the market to grow and develop, ensuring it provides choice, quality, sustainable and cost effective services to meet the needs of the residents across the county. It is an impressive document.
- viii. **Infection Prevention and Control Grant;** reducing infection transmission between and by care staff and safer visiting in care homes is a government and local authority priority. £3.58m of government funding has been distributed to Herefordshire care homes and community care providers with a further £1.47m being distributed during February. A new Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Grant of a further £0.68m is being distributed to care home providers to enable rapid testing of staff and visitors and £0.44m is being allocated to Herefordshire Council to assist with staffing capacity in social care provision.
- ix. **A new way of delivering project management;** the council has committed to making improvements to the way it identifies key areas of work, develops those ideas and delivers them. Key projects that are brought forward should help make the Delivery Plan a reality and if approved, be efficiently managed to optimise all aspects of resource and be able to demonstrate the difference made to our residents and businesses. A new ambitious project management system, managed by the Programme Management Office (PMO) is therefore currently being rolled out to ensure a robust and auditable process that supports the ambitions and priorities of the County Plan and makes efficient use of resources.
- x. **Visitor Economy –** The visitor economy project (funded by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership) continues to successfully promote the county as a place for staycations as people plan for their domestic holidays when the current restrictions end. The project steering group are finalising plans for a wide ranging media advertising campaign as lockdown restrictions are lifted.
- xi. **Fastershire;** Great news on the Fastershire front this month for places across the county: In Ross on Wye, the whole town will now get an upgrade to full fibre broadband thanks to the council's partnership with Full Fibre Ltd. Shobdon Airfield has been awarded a grant of £195k. This will extend Gigaclear's full fibre network by 5km to connect over 20 businesses across the airfield site. The last 2 BT cabinets have been completed in Hereford city centre connecting over

1,000 previously non-superfast lines. And ZZOOMM is starting its full fibre build in Hereford City.

- xii. **Constitutional Changes** – working is continuing with the Constitutional review with opportunities for members to provide input. On 11 October 2019, the council resolved to review its governance arrangements to investigate and explore options for the future. On 9 October 2020, the council approved a hybrid cabinet model of governance. The following guiding principles were set by the council:

- a. To maximise member engagement and participation in decision-making.
- b. To ensure decision-making is informed, transparent and efficient.
- c. To welcome public engagement.
- d. To enable member and officers to perform effectively in clearly defined functions and roles.
- e. To assess any resource implications for any proposed changes.

I am grateful to Cllr Bolderson and the working group for their time in considering this. Further progress reporting is being fed into the Audit and Governance committee on 16 March.

13. A list of the decisions taken by cabinet and cabinet members since the last report to Council (covering the period between 04 December to 25 February 2021) is provided at appendix A. Details of all these decisions, and of those taken by officers under delegated authority, are published on the councillors and democracy pages of the council's website.
14. Since my last report, no key decisions were taken under the general exception provisions (giving more than five but less than 28 days' notice). Two key decisions were taken under the urgency provisions (less than five days' notice) and no decisions were subject to call in. As identified in appendix A

Reporting progress against stated commitments in the Delivery Plan

15. The following table provides a brief summary of the council's 'month 4' progress against the priorities we have set out to in our delivery plan (adopted 26 November 2020). Whilst there are a number of projects planned, the proposed top strategic priorities for delivery in the coming years are:
- I. Delivery of affordable homes built to strong environmental standards
 - II. Improving the digital connectivity of the county
 - III. Creating jobs and skills that enable our residents to earn higher wages
 - IV. Creating a modern and resilient transport network within the City and County

Our progress from my last report, 4 December to 25 February the following key decisions have been taken.

<i>Links to County and Delivery Plan ...</i>	<i>The steps and decisions we have taken in this reporting period</i>
County plan ambition is to ensure:	A: Hereford Transport Strategy:

<p><i>Future transport systems must, and will, change, so we need to rethink our investment now in transport infrastructure to tackle the 21st century challenges of climate emergency and to support the wellbeing of our population.</i></p> <p>Corporate delivery plan priority:</p> <p>EN2.1: Complete the Hereford Transport Strategy Review and begin implementation of the preferred options and a modern and resilient transport network within the City and County</p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member Infrastructure</p>	<p>The decision reached by cabinet in December to stop the western bypass and southern link road schemes was recommended to Council that these schemes be removed from the capital programme. Subject to that approval it would be necessary to reallocate finances to address spend that had been incurred, through the use of earmarked reserves.</p> <p>The cabinet and I are aware of the strong views and opinions that have shaped the debate, for many years, in Herefordshire on the transport infrastructure needs for the county. While it is always important to be appraised of these factors it is absolutely essential to consider the current and urgent matters shaping our county now. As an administration we want to deliver improvements in the travel experience for those living, working and visiting Herefordshire.</p> <p>We want decisions that can be taken in a shorter timeframe, decisions we can take now, such as investing in public transport, walking and cycling. These priorities – we believe – provide value for money, ensure that our transport options are future proofed for the anticipated growth in education and jobs and take immediate steps to act upon the climate and ecological emergency.</p> <p>Longer term, my cabinet and I recognise the need and importance of a second river crossing in the city to provide greater resilience in the network. We are working with partners including local MPs to fund and develop these proposals further. But the imperative must be to deal with the here and now; improving the transport options and experiences for those making short journeys and ensuring that whatever measures we do bring forward must show that we are serious about the climate and ecological emergencies.</p>
<p>Decision maker: Cabinet</p>	<p>B: The Budget:</p> <p>Perhaps the clearest statement about how much has changed for the council in the last year is captured in the difficult budget proposals put forward to council by the executive. Covid 19 has led to a significant uplift in demand in adults and childrens services. We can only plan for this demand led need continuing. Pressures involved in the delivery of adults social care services had informed the decision to propose a precept of 4.99% including 3% in respect of adult social care.</p> <p>The council tax increase was proposed reluctantly at what was a difficult time but the increase would allow for: the expansion of the tax base; an increase in support for people unable to pay council tax; and the council to take advantage of government grants.</p> <p>We also have anticipated reduction in income with many families and individuals having lost, or at high risk, of losing their primary course of income.</p> <p>Proposing the largest savings programme to be undertaken at the council is not a decision taken lightly. I firmly believe that in taking the</p>

	appropriate steps now will allow the council to plan more confidently for future years to come. The budget was a balance between savings, the preservation of services and a council tax increase to ensure key frontline services are protected.
<p>County plan ambition is to ensure: <i>Public transport – safe, accessible and connecting communities</i></p> <p>A top priority is: <i>a modern and resilient transport network within the City and County</i></p> <p>Decision maker: <i>Cabinet Member Infrastructure</i></p>	<p>C: Changes to the governance of the West Midlands Rail Limited:</p> <p>This decision enabled the Council’s representative to vote in favour of the amendments to the company’s Articles of Association to agree government plans to devolve management of rail franchises (such as West Midlands Rail) to regions, bringing about more local control over services delivered by a franchise.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council joined membership in 2015. The West Midlands Rail Executive Board is made up of Leaders or senior cabinet members appointed by each of the Partner Authorities. The Cabinet members role on the Board is to provide the West Midlands Rail Executive with strategic and policy guidance towards developing a new, local passenger rail franchise for the West Midlands, as well as gaining influence over other key routes across the region.</p>
<p>A County Plan ambition is to: <i>Grow jobs and keep unemployment rates low in all areas of the county</i></p> <p><i>Improve educational attainment and widen further and higher education opportunities</i></p> <p>Corporate delivery plan Objective EC3.1:</p> <p><i>Enable and support the development & expansion of higher education in the county (NMITE, HCA), including through supporting work to increase the availability of student accommodation</i></p> <p>Decision maker: <i>Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services</i></p>	<p>D: ‘Get Building Funding’ the New Model Institute Technology and Engineering (NMITE):</p> <p>The Get Building Fund has been established by government to support economic recovery from Covid 19.</p> <p>This decision enabled the Accountable Body, Shropshire Council, to delegate responsibility for managing the ‘Get Building Funding’ grant and the relationship with the successful grant applicant NMITE to Herefordshire Council. The grant amount of £1.6m for the project will be transferred from the Accountable Body to the Council, £800,000 in 2020/21 and £800,000 in 2021/22. The grant funding will accelerate development of NMITE’s Centre for Automated Manufacturing on the Hereford Enterprise Zone.</p> <p>Covid 19 has had an unprecedented impact on the Herefordshire population and the local economy. Nationally and locally it is recognised that the economic impact of Covid 19 has had the greatest impact on younger generations. In September 2020, the total number of claimants for out-of-work benefits was 5,000; a 137% increase since March 2020 compared to a 117% rise in England in the same period.</p> <p>A recent report by Grant Thornton for The County Councils’ Network identified Herefordshire as one of the counties estimated to have experienced a greater than average decline in Gross Value Added (GVA) and classified 55.59% of employment in the county as currently ‘at risk’ compared to 48.78% in England as a whole.</p> <p>The Get Building Funding will enable NMITE to accelerate the development of the Centre for Automated Manufacturing (CAM) providing trade and employment to local contractors initially, as well as new jobs and learning opportunities when the centre is completed.</p>

	<p>The NMITE project will also help address some of Herefordshire's longer term economic challenges, such as a low wage economy (weekly wages circa 20% below the national average), low productivity (27% below the national average), and ageing population (24% aged 65 or over).</p> <p>The development of Higher Education provision in Herefordshire could have a transformational impact in addressing these issues, retaining/ attracting younger generations to study and live in the county, attracting new businesses to invest in Herefordshire offering higher value employment opportunities, and establishing an engineering skills base in a sector where there is a recognised significant national shortage. Students living and studying in the county will also have a significant impact on the local economy.</p>
<p>A County Plan priority is to:</p> <p><i>Spend public money in the local economy wherever possible</i></p> <p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective - EC6.1:</p> <p><i>Develop and implement a Social Value procurement policy to maximise the local benefit of all council spending</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member for commissioning, procurement and assets.</p>	<p>E: Herefordshire Council Social Value:</p> <p>Herefordshire Council Social value is a decision we have taken to approve a new social value approach for Herefordshire Council, encompassing a social value definition, pledges, key value indicators and measurement framework.</p> <p>The Social Value Act 2012 came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires those who commission public services to consider how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits through their contracting arrangements. The council has built into our contract procedure rules the need for social value to be considered through the contracting process.</p> <p>In 2020 a review of the council's approach to social value was undertaken working with Social Value Business Ltd who were commissioned to support the research into best practice. To inform the approach and priority areas to focus the review involved an assessment of the council's county plan, procurement and commissioning strategy and joint needs assessment. Internal and external stakeholders were consulted, including local third sector organisations, a selection of suppliers via a survey and targeted discussions with five of the council's high value suppliers to understand their approach and commitment to social value</p> <p>In addition to placing local prosperity (in the widest sense), improving quality of life, supporting local employment, skills and developing income at the council is seeking to build into our procurement social value.</p>
<p>A County Plan priority is to:</p> <p><i>Increase road safety in the county and improve the overall condition of the road network</i></p> <p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective -</p>	<p>F: £2m Investment in the local road network:</p> <p>In January, the proposed allocation of £2m investment in C and U roads was approved. This followed the full Council resolution (14 February 2020), that the capital programme for 2020/21 would be amended to re-allocate £2m for the Hereford Transport Package to repair and maintain the U and C roads network.</p>

<p><i>CO0.4: Deliver the asset management plan to improve road conditions across the county</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member for infrastructure and transport</p>	<p>The investment will be prioritised on known data of areas of highest investment need within the asset management team. The data has been cross referenced with 'in year' surveys producing a map-based interface to identify areas of repair. The programme for delivery was subject to a survey of the C and U road highway network and assessment of the network. The works identified began implementation in January 2021 and we expect completion by March 2021.</p> <p>This investment will go a small way towards rectifying defects in or road system which has suffered from inadequate funding for many years.</p>
<p>A County Plan priority is to:</p> <p><i>Make Herefordshire a destination of choice for walking and cycling tourism and to increase significantly the use of these active means of travel by local residents.</i></p> <p><i>Enable more healthy low carbon travel options, including walking, public transport and cycling, to reduce congestion, improve local air quality and enhance health and wellbeing.</i></p> <p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective:</p> <p>Creating a modern and resilient transport network within the City and County</p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member for infrastructure and transport</p>	<p>G: The Hereford City Centre Transport Package (HCCTP):</p> <p>The HCCTP is a key project in supporting the development and growth of Hereford. It is an integrated package of schemes comprising a new link road between the A465 and A49(T); public transport, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure improvements and public transport infrastructure in Commercial Road, Blueschool Street and Newmarket Street and a new multi-modal Transport Hub at Hereford railway station.</p> <p>After the City Link Road was completed and opened to traffic at the end of 2017 access to plots of land for future development has been realised. The construction of a new medical centre has been completed and a student accommodation scheme serving higher education students is nearing completion. Both projects are anticipated to increase patronage and demand for better public transport, including improvements to public spaces and pedestrian and cycle provisions.</p> <p>My administration is keen to ensure that remaining investment gives added weight to support public transport, walking and cycling. The project will seek to continue to deliver the objectives as outlined in the 2015 business case for HCCTP.</p> <p>The progression of the remaining elements of the HCCTP will be the subject of further governance decisions which will lay out the budget and programme for these elements.</p>
<p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective:</p> <p><i>EC2.5: Develop Maylord Orchards as a key strategic site; acting as a catalyst for the regeneration of Hereford City Centre</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member commissioning, procurement and assets.</p>	<p>H: Maylord Orchards Shopping Centre - Procurement of Management Contract:</p> <p>The current contract for the management of the Maylord Shopping Centre has been in place since the council obtained outright control of the asset in June this year. The management contract is for a period of one year and is due to expire on the 12 June 2021. This decision allows the council to move into a new contract with a service provider in order that the shopping centre can operate and that rent and service charges are collected and administered.</p> <p>The council are the freehold owners of the shopping centre – the centre itself comprises multiple tenant leases and licences of varying</p>

	<p>lengths and terms. In addition, at the time of acquiring the leasehold interest there were a considerable number of vacant shop units and in general there had been a lack of investment in the centre during the preceding years.</p> <p>Montagu Evans, who already had knowledge of the asset and experience of managing similar shopping centres throughout the country, were appointed to manage the centre for a period of one year with a new contract needing to be in place when the current contract expires in June 2021. This will be procured in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules.</p>
<p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective:</p> <p><i>CO2.2: Continue the improvement of the children's safeguarding system to ensure children and families get the right support at the right time, including early help and reduce the number of children needing to be cared for by the council</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet Member children and families</p>	<p>I: Strengthening the recruitment of Council Foster Carers:</p> <p>We have taken a decision to approve the business case for investment in commissioned marketing and engagement services to strengthen the council's in-house fostering service. We want to increase the number of general and specialist foster carers and reduce the reliance on the more costly Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) in line with Herefordshire's County Plan and Children and Young People's Plan.</p> <p>All councils have a duty to make arrangements for the accommodation and care of children for whom it has a responsibility. However, under the sufficiency duty local authorities are required to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided.</p> <p>We must have regard to the benefits of securing a range of accommodation through a number of providers. The accommodation must also meet the needs of children. The cabinet's preference is to place children with suitable foster carers within its own in-house fostering service before considering placement in the independent sector, as a way of ensuring children can be placed locally and of managing costs.</p> <p>Investing in new marketing and engagement activities with the expectation of increasing approvals to at least thirty per year is estimated to cost in the region of £2m-£2.6m would be avoided over a five-year period, or £400k-£520k on average per year, compared to IFA placement costs. Further costs may also be avoided as a result of other work to improve the retention of carers, reduce unnecessary use of high cost residential accommodation, and reduce placement demand as the number of children and young people in care decreases.</p>
<p>A County Plan priority is to:</p> <p><i>Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people</i></p> <p>Corporate Delivery Plan Objective:</p>	<p>J: Recommissioning of Independent Advocacy Services</p> <p>The council has a statutory duty to provide independent advocacy services. This decision enables an external provider to deliver independent advocacy services for adults, discharging the council's statutory duties and ensuring the voices of vulnerable adults in Herefordshire are heard.</p>

<p><i>CO4 – Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet member health and adult wellbeing</p>	<p>In addition, there is also provision of generic advocacy. Whilst this is not a statutory requirement, the council has provided it through the advocacy commissioned provider. There is anecdotal evidence that the provision of this advocacy eases pressures elsewhere in the system. For example many of the referrals during the peak of the recent pandemic related to people with mental health issues as a consequence of concerns or changes arising from the pandemic.</p> <p>There is a small, but competitive market of providers who are able to offer advocacy services. Therefore we will complete a competitive open tender exercise to procure a five year contract. There is a consistent level of demand, so that in an average 3 month period there would be around 450 vulnerable Herefordshire residents actively supported by advocacy services. Over 90 per cent of this demand is for statutory advocacy, with 70 percent for advocacy provided under the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act.</p>
<p>A County Plan priority is to:</p> <p>Continue to support the significant growth of education opportunities within the county to provide new opportunities for younger people to live and learn locally. The council will promote a culture of lifelong learning throughout the county and enable access to tools and resources to support upskilling, reskilling and employability by providing routes to training opportunities, apprenticeships and hands-on experience.</p> <p>Links with the Corporate Delivery Plan Objective:</p> <p>Increase the number of HE (Higher Education) students, adult and community learning students, apprenticeships and job placements, and quality of the provision in each, and</p> <p>EC3.3: Provide more apprenticeships, including through the council's direct contracts</p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet member, environment, economy and skills.</p>	<p>K: Kickstart scheme, providing work experience placements to 16 to 24 year olds:</p> <p>In February we approved and accepted grant funding offered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The council successfully applied to DWP to be a gateway authority for the delivery of the Kickstart scheme across Herefordshire.</p> <p>The Kickstart scheme funds 6 monthly work experience placements for 16 to 24 year olds receiving universal credit as part of the Governments Covid 19 response. The Kickstart scheme funds 16-24 year olds receiving universal credit to participate on a job placement for a minimum of 25 hours per week for 6 months, and paid at least national minimum wage.</p> <p>Across the UK younger generations have been some of those worst affected economically by the pandemic. In Herefordshire there has been a 108% increase in people aged between 18 and 24 claiming out of work benefits since March 2020.</p> <p>The Kickstart scheme fully meets the salary and on costs for each placement, as well as providing £1,500 towards supporting the individual with skills and wrap around support during their placement. The scheme provides 16 to 24 year olds to gain valuable work experience and develop employability skills, as well as providing employers new opportunities.</p> <p>At the end of December 2020 DWP approved the council's gateway application, issuing a funding offer letter to support 105 placements in 22 of the organisations that have offered placements to date (including the council and Hoople).</p> <p>It is anticipated that the number of placements may increase, once selected as a 'gateway' it is possible to request funding for additional placements as they become available up until end of December 2021.</p>

<p>County Plan stated ambition:</p> <p><i>Minimise waste and increase reuse, repair and recycling</i></p> <p>Corporate Delivery plan objective:</p> <p><i>EN1.1 Develop a new waste strategy that drives the environmental ambition of the council, delivers value for money and meets residents' expectation. The new strategy will inform the future commissioning of waste collection and disposal in Herefordshire</i></p> <p>Decision maker: Cabinet member commissioning procurement and assets.</p>	<p>L: Review and authorise a resourcing plan to take forward and implement the waste management review:</p> <p>The council is currently undertaking a waste management review whereby the council is likely to be responsible for delivering a significant change programme in the way that waste is collected and disposed of throughout the county.</p> <p>This decision authorises expenditure of up to £821,000 to resource and implement the outcome of the waste review. Two options are under consideration. Two stream recycling - materials are presented for collection in two streams each collected every three weeks (alternating on the third week with residual). And Kerbside Sort recycling where materials are presented weekly for collection in three streams and separated into four compartments on the vehicle.</p> <p>Both options are in line with the government's expectation as outlined in the Resource and Waste Strategy 2018 (RWS 2018), the expected change in legislation around the collection of food waste. This is in line with the council's own commitments and objectives as outlined in the County Plan and in response to the climate and ecological emergency as declared by the council in March 2019.</p> <p>Currently the collection contract is worth £4m per year and the disposable contract is worth £11m per year. The council has undertaken a public consultation with residents and businesses in Herefordshire which was launched in December 2020 and concluding in February 2021.</p>
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Community impact

16. The County Plan shapes the future of Herefordshire and aims to encourage and strengthen our vibrant communities, create a thriving local economy and protect and enhance our environment to ensure Herefordshire remains a great place to live, visit, work, learn and do business. The plan guides the work of the council and our relationship with individuals, families, communities and partners over the next four years. Our recently published delivery plan outlines the detailed work that we have committed to delivering over the next eighteen months.
17. 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. Reporting to Council the activities of the executive demonstrates the council's commitment to the code of corporate governance principle of implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Environmental Impact

18. A central underpinning of Herefordshire Council's County Plan is healthy, connected and vibrant ecosystems strongly support the local economy, improve health and wellbeing and make the county an attractive place to live and to visit. It is a commitment of the plan to protect and enhance this environment while stewarding it for future generations.

19. The council's delivery plan is underpinned by the commitment of this executive to use our unique role as leaders of the places we represent to help people feel safe, supported and proud of our unique and beautiful environment and we shall tackle the climate challenge through new approaches to sustainability. In doing this we will base our work on the lessons we have learned, what our residents and businesses tell us and our understanding of what our county needs for a successful future.

Equality duty

20. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
21. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
22. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

Resource implications

23. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The financial implications of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix A have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken and will inform any future decision making.

Legal implications

24. The council and committee, and cabinet rules within the constitution require the Leader to provide a report to Council on the work of the Cabinet since the last meeting of Council and, at the first meeting to follow the annual meeting of Council, on the priorities of the cabinet and (except in a year when there are ordinary elections) progress made in meeting those priorities. Appointment of cabinet members and allocation of portfolio responsibilities are responsibilities of the Leader of the Council,

and the constitution requires that any changes are subsequently reported to Council. This report ensures these requirements are met.

25. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix A have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken

Risk management

26. There are no risks arising from the recommendations of this report. The risks of any decisions of the executive listed at appendix A have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken and will inform future decision making.

Consultees

27. None.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Executive decisions taken from 4 December 2020 to 25 February, 2021.
- Appendix B – Cabinet Member Portfolios

Background papers

None