

**Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Conference Room,
Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE
on Thursday 26 May 2022 at 2.30 pm**

Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:	Councillor Liz Harvey, Leader of the Council (Chairperson) Councillor , Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson)
	Councillors Ellie Chowns, Pauline Crockett, John Harrington and Diana Toynbee
Cabinet Members in remote attendance	Councillors Ange Tyler <i>Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.</i>

Cabinet support members in attendance	Councillors John Hardwick
Group leaders / representatives in attendance	Councillors Peter Jinman, Toni Fagan and Jonathan Lester
Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance	Councillors Elissa Swinglehurst, Jonathan Lester and Phillip Howells
Officers in attendance:	Chief Executive, Director of resources and assurance, Director of Public Health, Service Director - All Ages Commissioning, Corporate Director - Children & Young People, Interim head of legal services and Interim Delivery Director

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Hitchiner and Davies.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

113. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

114. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 14)

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

115. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from councillors.

To assist with the efficient transaction of business, the agenda item 'Promoting Safety: Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24' was taken out of order, after public and councillor questions had been received. The rest of the agenda followed the order in the published agenda.

116. PROMOTING SAFETY: HEREFORDSHIRE'S STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC ABUSE 2021-24

The cabinet member health and adult wellbeing introduced the report. The draft strategy was produced in October 2021. A significant consultation process had taken place since then and the version before this meeting was the final version for approval.

The cabinet member highlighted that:

- The information gathered through the consultation and ongoing engagement would inform future service delivery;
- Production of this strategy was a statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and it would be regularly updated;
- A multi-agency local partnership board had been formed, had positive engagement from key partners and representation from people with lived experience of domestic abuse, the board was responsible for monitoring and measuring progress on outcomes;
- A grant had been provided by the government to deliver the duties in the Domestic Abuse Act and the services to be commissioned would be subject to a separate decision;
- Changes to the document included increased focus on outcomes and further detail on the challenges posed by rurality.

The cabinet member stressed the need to raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families, recognising that domestic abuse is not only physical violence but can also include being emotionally controlling or coercive control and economic abuse.

Cabinet members discussed the report and noted:

- A strong determination to address domestic abuse;
- The important of clear governance when lots of different agencies were involved;
- The difficulties of short-term funding which may make it hard to plan;
- Links with the community safety partnership.

The chairperson of the adults and wellbeing scrutiny committee thanked the executive for the positive response to the recommendations made by the committee when it reviewed the draft strategy. The committee had noted:

- the potential around increased integration with Talk Community and a holistic approach including support within communities;
- that the assumption that the victim survivor should leave the home needed to be challenged;
- the importance of education and information about the different types of abuse.

Group leaders and representatives presented the comments and queries from their groups. There was general support for the strategy and it was noted that:

- the strategy would need to be promoted and the council would be working with key partners to raise awareness through their channels as well as through the council's various media and social media contacts;
- the implementation of the strategy was critical;
- the links between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic abuse were now recognised in the document and working in partnership with the animal sector would help to identify potential abuse.

It was resolved that:

- a) **The final draft of Promoting Safety: Herefordshire's Strategy for Addressing Domestic Abuse 2021 – 2024 be approved for implementation;**

- b) The responses to the recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee in appendix 4 of this report are approved; and
- c) Approval of updates to the strategy and the associated needs assessment, be delegated to the Director for Community Wellbeing in consultation with cabinet members during the lifetime of the strategy.

117. CHILDREN IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE

The cabinet member children and families introduced the report. She welcomed the input from stakeholders on the new version of the improvement plan and noted ongoing conversations with strategic partners. The cabinet member also highlighted the publication of the final report from the independent review of children's social care. The government would be responding to this by the end of the year, and the council would take account of any changes in guidance and practice in future updates to the improvement plan.

The corporate director children and young people reminded cabinet members of the background to the improvement plan and key points of the revised document. The next update in July would include details of the additional funding allocation to support the transformation of the service. An inspection of the service by Ofsted was anticipated at some point in the current year. The appointment of new permanent service directors was confirmed and the reduction in caseloads for social workers and more frequent supervision was welcomed. The council continued to work with external partners including the local government association to identify progress and areas for further improvement.

The deputy leader of the council made a statement on the recently broadcast BBC Panorama programme and other media coverage on the council's children's services. She acknowledged the concerns raised by residents and councillors and thanked those who had raised specific concerns about their own experiences. The council had invested in the additional staff and resources needed to improve services and was one year into a three-year plan. Supporting families and protecting vulnerable children continued to be the number one priority for the council and the cabinet.

Cabinet members thanked staff for their work on the revised plan and were pleased to see increased focus on outcomes and the progress made to date. The skill, commitment and compassion of staff was recognised.

The chairperson of the children and young people scrutiny committee explained that progress on the improvement plan would be considered at the next scrutiny committee meeting on 21 June. He noted the greater focus on specific metrics and direction of travel, which addressed points raised previously by the committee.

Group leaders and representatives gave the comments and queries from their groups. The new performance reporting was welcomed as it gave a clearer picture of progress and the statistics reported were encouraging. It was noted that:

- It was important to work with and support families as a key mechanism to protect children;
- It was important that decision making was checked to give assurance that good decisions were being made and to give confidence to the workforce;
- Rebuilding trust would take time but the change of culture within the service should start to show in the evidence;
- The multi-agency early help offer needed further development;
- It was important to pick up issues in families that lived or accessed services outside Herefordshire, working with neighbouring authorities to ensure good consultation and dialogue.

It was resolved that the cabinet:

- a) Reflect on the progress and impact of improvement activity; and
- b) note the development of version two of the Improvement Plan.

118. NUTRIENT CERTAINTY

As the two items are closely linked, the reports on Nutrient Certainty and Phosphate Credit Pricing and Allocation Policy were debated together. The recommendations were voted on separately.

The cabinet member infrastructure and transport introduced the reports. He thanked officers for their work on the project, which had taken a significant length of time to bring forward and acknowledged the role of the chairperson of the nutrient management board as a supportive and interested advisor on the project.

Cabinet members heard that:

- The nutrient certainty report set out the progress made to date but did not represent a final position;
- The integrated wetlands were a mechanism which allowed the council to strip phosphates out of sewage discharge before it entered the river, enabling some housing development to proceed;
- The current moratorium on housebuilding in the north of the county had had a significant impact on income to the county and on builders and developers operating in Herefordshire;
- The council was not responsible for the health of the rivers in the county, as this role sat with national agencies, but in order to support the building industry the council had chosen to commit resources to this innovative mitigation solution;
- The wetlands would provide a degree of betterment to the river system, which was welcomed, but the primary objective was to provide mitigation for development and the council would continue to press the government to provide funds to national agencies to address the underlying issue of pollution in the river systems.

The interim delivery director for waste transformation and wetland project explained the technical detail of the reports. She reminded cabinet members of the background to the moratorium on house building and explained that it had taken a long time to pull the project together because this was the first time anybody had been able to measure how much phosphate leaves a sewage treatment plant and how much reed beds take up to a level of scientific certainty that they could put a trading system onto that. In addition to the impact of river pollution on wildlife and biodiversity, the inability to approve housing development in the north of the county had a huge impact in constraining the supply of homes, including affordable homes, and on the council's income in terms of its council tax base and new homes bonus from the government. Cabinet members also noted that:

- The modelling undertaken was robust and allowed for factors such as climate change over the next 70 years and differences in rainfall across the year;
- The modelling work was expected to be completed within the next few weeks and would be brought in a future report for final sign off;
- It was important that those responsible for the pollution of the rivers should address the underlying causes of high levels of phosphates but the wetland scheme would allow for some river betterment in addition to releasing development;
- The phosphate credit system proposed would operate on a first come first served policy based on the date the planning application was first validated, this information had already been released to developers and would be made public so they could see where each site was in the queue;

- In future it might be possible to have a policy which reflected priorities such as eco-friendly housing and affordable housing but this would require further development;
- The income from the credits would cover the costs of maintaining the wetland sites for 80 years and there was no intention to make a profit, however the council was assuming the risk of purchasing the land and constructing the wetlands and this was reflected in the price of the credits;
- Each housing development would have a bespoke calculation but the report set out estimates of the costs depending on the treatment of sewage from that development;
- The next steps would be to start contacting developers about section 106 agreements and getting their planning applications up to date in terms of habitat risk assessments, ready for when the council could finally confirm it had achieved nutrient certainty.

A considerable amount of work had gone into the project and officers and partner agencies were thanked for their efforts. Particular thanks were offered to the landowner at Luston where the first integrated wetlands was constructed and it was hoped that other landowners would show the same public spirited approach.

Cabinet members welcomed the reports and noted that additional capacity had been brought into the planning team to get developments moving and the appropriate section 106 agreements drawn up and also into the ecology team to support the required habitat risk assessments.

Group leaders and representatives gave the views and queries of their groups. It was noted that:

- This was ground-breaking work and an innovative solution which was widely welcomed;
- Government funding had contributed to the development of the project, in recognition of the challenges Herefordshire faced;
- It was hoped that there would be some public access to the wetlands sites, for example for educational visits, subject to appropriate safety controls;
- A number of scenarios had been modelled to arrive at the estimated cost of credits and these had been rigorously tested to make sure the assumptions were robust;
- A small number of developments may not be viable with the costs of these credits but at the moment this was the only solution available, it was hoped that this scheme might lead to private schemes coming forward to unlock more development;
- The development sector would need support to restart development in the north of the county as applications had lapsed and supply chains fallen apart;
- The mechanisms for testing viability of sites needed to be checked to make sure they were taking account of all the relevant factors;
- There were some reservations that credit trading would make polluting practices acceptable and one of the major sources of river pollution in the area, the proliferation of intensive poultry units, would not be addressed by this approach;
- This approach would apply at the moment only to that part of the Lugg SAC considered to be failing in the north of the county, while there were those who felt that the River Wye was also failing, or very close to it, the council was not required to mitigate this and needed to carefully consider where it committed funds.

The chairperson of the nutrient management board was invited to comment on the reports. She thanked all those involved in setting up the wetlands project. In response to her query it was confirmed that 20% of the phosphate removed would always be

reserved for river betterment so if the wetland performed better than expected this would generate both additional betterment and also additional credits.

It was resolved:

- a) To note the progress being made to create Integrated Wetlands and to determine Nutrient Certainty; and
- b) To receive a further report as soon as is practicable and when all reasonable due diligence has been completed to consider whether Nutrient Certainty has actually been achieved.

119. PHOSPHATE CREDIT PRICING AND ALLOCATION POLICY

Due to the close connection, this report was discussed alongside the previous agenda item on Nutrient Certainty but the recommendations voted on separately.

It was resolved:

- a) To continue with all further necessary preparations to the point of commencing trading of credits but not to proceed with the sale of credits until a further report has been provided to Cabinet updating on Nutrient Certainty of the integrated wetlands;
- b) To approve the pricing of Phosphate Credits at £14,000 + VAT per kilogram of offset required per year;
- c) To allocate and ring fence the Phosphate Credit income into the specific Wetland Revenue Reserve to fund the ongoing wetland maintenance, Phosphate Credit administration and investment in further phosphate reduction initiatives across the County;
- d) To approve an interim 'First Come First Served' policy in validation order allocation of Phosphate Credits for housing development applications received and validated on or prior to 31st October 2021 as outlined in this report;
- e) To note the Phosphate Credit Allocation Procedure as set out in this report;
- f) To agree that, where a planning application lapses or a developer chooses not to proceed to build, all unused Phosphate Credits will be forfeited and the fee paid for them returned to the developer less an administration fee, as part of the Section 106 agreement Process;
- g) To receive a report at a future date to agree a permanent Phosphate Credit allocation policy for applications received on or after 1st November 2021;
- h) To delegate to the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport minor clarifications and amendments to the interim Phosphate Credit allocation policy as may be needed from time to time and to review and update the Phosphate Credit price as required; and
- i) To review the price of phosphate credits in March 2026 based on actual final build and three years actual operating costs.

[Break]

The meeting adjourned at 4:22 pm.

The following councillors left the meeting during the adjournment: Cllr Toni Fagan, Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst, Cllr Phillip Howells.

The meeting resumed at 4:33 pm.

120. ENERGY REBATE DISCRETIONARY FUND

The cabinet member finance, corporate services and planning introduced the report and explained that it set out how the council proposed to distribute the discretionary element of the funding to households who did not qualify for the main scheme.

Group leaders and representatives gave the comments and queries of their groups. It was noted that:

- Those who lived in properties with higher tax bands did not always have higher levels of disposable income so it was right to offer support;
- A communications plan would be in place to raise awareness of how to benefit from this scheme, including among those without online access;
- Recent announcements from the government would provide further support but the detail had not yet been received.

It was resolved that:

- a) **The Energy Rebate Discretionary Fund scheme and the criteria for the allocation of the funding is approved; and**
- b) **That all operational and budgetary decisions regarding this scheme be delegated to the director of resources and assurance.**

121. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT ADVANCE REQUEST

The cabinet member environment and economy introduced the report. She explained that the new Herefordshire County BID had requested a loan for the first year of its operation, to be repaid as the levy was collected from businesses. This would support set up costs and the initial marketing activity to promote tourism in the county. A similar facility had been put in place for the Hereford City BID when it was first set up. As the council was the billing authority it would be responsible for collecting the levy and would deduct the repayments from the funds collected. There was no financial risk to the council as nationwide figures show only a very small percentage of businesses fail to pay and the loan would be recouped in less than a year.

Group leaders and representatives gave their comments. The reasons for the loan were understood and the assurances given on the expected repayment were acknowledged and accepted.

It was resolved:

- a) **To approve a short term 0% loan of up to £210,000 in 2022/23 to the Herefordshire County BID Limited, to be paid on commencement of the Operating Agreement and repaid within the financial year through collection of the levy by the council as the billing authority; and**
- b) **To delegate to the Section 151 Officer following consultation with the cabinet member environment and economy all operational decisions in relation to the payment and recovery of the loan.**

122. QUARTER 4 BUDGET & PERFORMANCE REPORT

The cabinet member finance, corporate services and planning introduced the report and highlighted a published correction to one of the tables. She explained that the council had faced the largest in-year savings target ever at over £11m in addition to the continued challenges of covid and that the final outturn was an underspend of nearly £550k. Additional covid grant support from central government had gone a long way towards meeting the additional costs incurred but there were still significant impacts such as delays to delivery of capital projects.

Cabinet members highlighted the key achievements and progress in their portfolio areas and thanked officers for their support during the year.

Group leaders and representatives put comments and questions on behalf of their groups. It was noted that:

- Further work was needed with parish councils and communities on how to access Section 106 contributions, the importance of updating their lists of infrastructure requests and positively engaging with planning processes;
- A dedicated talk parish session on Section 106 processes was being considered;
- The council would consult with parishes and ward members as part of the Section 106 process but as the senior authority and highways authority the final decisions were the responsibility of Herefordshire Council;
- Previous feasibility work on an eastern bridge route was being reviewed and updated as necessary and would be shared when ready;
- Over 60 talk community hubs had been set up, with the council providing seed funding and support to get them off the ground and development officers to help those running the hubs to ensure they had a sustainable future;
- It was intended that the talk community hubs would work closely with NHS partners and the integrated care services board to develop diagnostic services within some hubs and further expand the services they could offer;
- It was important to share details about the services and projects that the council delivered each year.

It was resolved that:

- a) Cabinet, having reviewed performance and financial forecast for year 2021/22, as set out in the appendices A-F, has not identified any additional actions to be considered to achieve future improvements.

The meeting ended at 5.26 pm

Chairperson

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 26 MAY 2022**Question 1**

From: anonymous (name and address supplied)
To: cabinet member, children and families

How long is a reasonable delay between the Council being alerted to a safeguarding risk to children and the Council taking action to prevent avoidable harm from the identified risk?

Response

In all cases the Local Authority has to ensure interventions are proportionate and considered; time is one of the factors which forms part of this deliberation. Statutory guidance allows for a varied level of different responses to safeguarding risks ranging from a number of hours to a number of weeks depending on circumstances (for instance an Initial Child Protection Conference needs to take place within 3 weeks of a multi-agency Strategy Meeting). In all cases, the Local Authority works in collaboration with other agencies and at times it is other agencies who are better able to take immediate actions (for instance for the police to exercise their powers of police protection). By working together with other agencies the Local Authority seeks to mitigate risks so far as is reasonably possible.

Supplementary Question

In my written question I asked ‘how long is a reasonable delay between the council being alerted to a safeguarding risk to children and the council taking action to prevent avoidable harm?’ I asked it because over 9 months ago I set out clearly, in writing, why the council’s current policy and practice in one area of safeguarding is both harmful and unlawful. I gave the written legal analysis to a senior officer in this council in August 2021. To date no officer has been able to counter my legal argument that the council’s policy and practice in this area is harmful and unlawful, and yet the council has not changed their policy and practice.

Senior officers are at pains to say that the council’s response to safeguarding risks has changed, but in this area the drift and delay identified by Judge Keehan seems to be alive and well. How long is a reasonable delay between the council being alerted to a policy and practice which discriminates against girls and the council taking action to prevent unlawful discrimination?

Response

The written question received a very general answer because it was a very general question. On the more specific issue it deserves a written answer and you will get a written answer. I do understand what is behind this question and the issues about girls safeguarding and protecting victims. I am seeing the chief executive tomorrow.

Written Response

This response assumes the question refers specifically to safeguarding in schools.

As a council we provide guidance and support to schools, who are responsible for their own policies and practice, overseen by Ofsted and the DfE. Council practice is not unlawful.

It is crucial that social care, police, health and the council work together to protect victims, and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership has produced local guidance specifically around peer on peer abuse

The day-to-day obligations in dealing with peer on peer abuse cases in schools will fall on the governing body and staff at the school; the Secretary of State has made guidance under s 175 Education Act 2002. This is entitled “Keeping children safe in education - Statutory guidance for

schools and colleges" and there is version which takes effect in September 2021 ("the Guidance") and both a council and a governing body must follow the guidance.

In following the Guidance schools and colleges would be following the provisions of the HRA. In certain cases, there may be circumstances which require the governing body and council approach to have regard to specific obligations of the HRA along with a duty to discharge those obligations, depending on the specific circumstances of the case.

Links to the current published guidance:

[Peer on peer abuse documents – Herefordshire Council](#)

[Policies and procedures - Herefordshire Safeguarding \(herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk\)](#)

Question 2

**From: Mr P McKay, Leominster
To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport**

Thank you for seeing the benefit of linking the 'Highways and public rights of way map' with open spaces maps, and asking officer to explore the possibility of developing this integrated approach. Would you also consider asking officer as part of this integrated approach to include making provision to show unadopted 'Highways not maintainable at public expense', with an appropriately coloured line, to avoid them appearing to be a gap in connectivity, even though some have public street lights, are shown with pink line, etc., on other pages?

Response

I am pleased that the intended integration of the open spaces map and Public Rights of Way map has been well received, work is still in progress to achieve this. I am pleased to be able to inform you that "highways not maintainable at public expense" are already incorporated on the integrated mapping system, and are shown in pink.

Supplementary Question

Could you kindly give some indication of when we may hope to view this integrated map of 'Highways, public rights of way, and open spaces', online?

Response

The cabinet member confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Written Response

The project to incorporate the various layers has been passed to colleagues in our IT department, once the scale of the task at hand is known then we will be in a better place to advise on the implementation of the solution. I am however not anticipating this to be either a complex or time consuming project to complete and would hope that the solution is in place by the end of the summer. An update will be issued to Mr McKay separately in August 2022.

Question 3

**From: Ms J Liddle, Ledbury
To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing**

What plans does Herefordshire Council have to develop its Domestic Abuse Strategy and adopt the approach of Plymouth by becoming an authority that is pro-active and explicit in its

commitment to tackling violence against women and girls? (<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/newsroom/pressreleases/councilunitedfightingviolenceagainstwomenandgirls>) Taking a public stand and maintaining that clear commitment sends out a valuable message to those who see domestic abuse as not really an issue in the county.

Response

Domestic Abuse is one type of gendered crime that falls within the umbrella of Violence Against Women and Girls. In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 our local strategy is based on the new broader definition of domestic abuse which removes some of the emphasis on gendered abuse. The council acknowledges however that there is a need to consider separately the issues specifically faced by women and girls and is committed to working with our partners to ensure strong leadership and effective working relationships.

The Council is committed to supporting the strategic priorities of Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, as outlined in their strategy for 2021/2024, which specifically include violence against women and girls and sexual violence.

Thank you for drawing our attention to the Plymouth approach, we will look into how this approach could benefit Herefordshire.

Supplementary Question

You're right the broader definition of domestic abuse removes some of the emphasis on gendered abuse but the question I'd like to put now is to what extent does the council acknowledge that women's inequality is still a major cause of domestic abuse?

Response

The cabinet member stated that the council took inequality at its face value and did not support inequality in any realm. The council was following the guidelines and the Domestic Abuse Strategy really addressed inequalities. The strategy was an organic document that would change every year and the council would continue to look at inequalities.

Question 4

**From: Ms S Melia, Leominster
To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing**

Why do the statistics in the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy cite the gender of the victims (70% are women) but not that of the perpetrators?

Response

The statistics included in the Strategy are taken from the needs assessment which was carried out in 2021. There is a statutory requirement to refresh the local needs assessment yearly which provides an opportunity for more detailed data to be included going forward.

The Council recognises that comparing more detailed data helps to understand the nature of abuse, avoid inaccurate assumptions and develop local strategy and policies that address the needs of the population.

The current needs assessment focused on the demand placed on numerous domestic abuse services within Herefordshire and the expected prevalence of domestic abuse in the county. We will provide the breakdown of the gender of perpetrators in the final strategy.

Supplementary question

How is it possible to develop an effective Domestic Abuse Strategy, including a focus on perpetrators as one of the four priorities, without an understanding of the profile of perpetrators?

Response

The cabinet member drew attention to the four priorities in the strategy and confirmed that a written answer would be provided.

Written response

It has been agreed that the gender breakdown and profile (age etc. if known) of perpetrators will now be recorded and discussed with the newly formed Local Partnership Board for inclusion as part of the organic future development of the strategy and action plan.

Question 5

**From: Dr R J McLean, Leominster
To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing**

Given that local authority resources are limited, of the four priorities in the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy, how will you prioritise between the four priorities?

Response

The Council's strategy for Domestic Abuse has been written in consultation with strategic partners with priorities that incorporate the roles of these partner agencies. The partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse ensures that no single agency is responsible alone for delivering against priorities and associated outcomes therefore, the Council will lead on some priorities with partner agencies leading on others. Progress on priorities and measurement of outcomes is reported through the Local Partnership Board which is a statutory requirement in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Partnership will utilise resources and be flexible in its approach to the priorities based the emerging evidence.

Supplementary Question

Will the priority in the Domestic Abuse Strategy on provision of services to victims and the priority on perpetrator programmes be in competition for limited resourcing?

Response

No we don't have any limitations, we will look at everything fairly.

Question 6

**From: Ms R Farkas, Sutton St Nicholas
To: cabinet member, health and adult wellbeing**

As we know that a significant proportion of children on statutory plans (including those in care or on the cusp of care) are from homes where domestic abuse is a key issue, to what extent does the authority see investment in addressing domestic abuse effectively for those families as an opportunity to avoid more costly interventions in the medium term?

Response

The Council is committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk of domestic abuse. Providing timely support to victim-survivors through both statutory agencies and commissioned

services is vital. The council recognises that many children are affected by a toxic trio of issues within their family or home including domestic abuse. In light of this the Edge of Care team was established in 2019, the objective of the Service is to reduce the problematic domestic abuse, drug or alcohol and inter-related behaviours in order to reduce the risk of becoming Looked After Children, and to enable successful reunification of families.

The Council recognises that there is additional work required to identify domestic abuse at the earliest possible stage and to this end is in discussion with West Mercia Women's Aid to explore options for workforce development specifically for those practitioners working with vulnerable children and young people.

Intervening and supporting effectively may also reduce longer term costs but this is a secondary consideration.

Supplementary question

Is there not an argument for medium-term considerations when deciding on investment in domestic abuse services?

Response

Yes there is and we will be looking at it in the future.

