

# Title of report: Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

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| <b>Meeting:</b>        | <b>Cabinet</b>                                 |
| <b>Meeting date:</b>   | <b>Thursday 16 May 2024</b>                    |
| <b>Cabinet member:</b> | <b>Leader, Corporate Strategy and Budget</b>   |
| <b>Report by:</b>      | <b>Director of Strategy and Transformation</b> |
| <b>Report author:</b>  | <b>Director of Strategy and Transformation</b> |

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Budget and policy framework

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

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

The council's constitution requires Cabinet to make recommendations to council in respect of budget and policy framework items; the Herefordshire Council Plan forms part of this framework.

Recommendation(s)

## **That:**

- (a) **The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028, as set out at appendix A, is approved by Cabinet to go forward to the annual Council meeting for agreement;**

Alternative options

1. Not to do a Council Plan, this is not recommended as the Council is required to have a corporate plan in line with the council's constitution. The Herefordshire Council Plan forms part of the budget and policy framework.
2. To amend the proposals; it is open to Cabinet to recommend alternatives to the vision, ambition and priorities to those proposed. However, any alternatives should be informed by the evidence base available and the prevailing financial and policy context.

## **Key considerations**

3. The Herefordshire Council Plan has been developed to set the vision for the council following public consultation and engagement with cabinet members and staff. Nearly 1000 people have been engaged through a range of events, targeted workshops throughout the county and an online survey.
4. The plan provides the strategic framework for the council that outlines the vision, priorities and objectives over the next four years, and informs how our resources and budgets are prioritised.
5. Through the development of the Herefordshire Council Plan, four corporate priorities have been identified. These are:
  - I. People – We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities who support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.
  - II. Place – We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire is a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place, we will support access to green spaces and we will do everything we can to recover the health of our rivers.
  - III. Growth – We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development along with providing the right infrastructure.
  - IV. Transformation – We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money.
6. Recognising that these priorities do not exist in isolation we will work in collaboration with residents and communities, businesses and partners, to build on the strengths of the county and on the strong partnerships that we have developed to deliver the vision and objectives for Herefordshire. Partnership approach underpins the priorities and objectives set out in the plan and will guide future service design, planning and policy making.
7. The Herefordshire Council Plan, alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy, provides the overarching policy framework within which decisions will be taken and resources allocated by Herefordshire Council over the next 4 years.
8. This plan has been developed and informed through a process of engagement with the public and key stakeholders. Details of the consultees can be found in Consultees section of this report.
9. The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the objectives which encapsulate the plan's priorities for the next four years, including what people felt were missing from the

ambitions' objectives. There were 600 people who engaged in the events and 390 responses from the online survey, the top 5 objective statements which participants felt should be responded to most urgently were:

- I. Ensure people feel safe and respected in their communities.
  - II. Ensure that residents are enabled to live healthy lives within their communities.
  - III. Protect the county's biodiversity, value nature and uphold environmental standards.
  - IV. Tackle inequality by focusing on early intervention and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.
  - V. Expand the transport and infrastructure network to improve access across the county.
10. A report summarising the findings of the public engagement and consultation can be found at appendix B. Feedback resulting from the engagement process has been included in the shaping and developing of the plan, vision, ambition and priorities.
11. A key consideration in developing the plan are the strategic documents for the council that will enable the plan to be delivered. There are a number of key strategic documents that align to the priorities of the plan and which will support delivery. The plan provides a diagram that articulates these documents set against these priorities. Some of these strategic documents are:
- I. Big Economic Plan, The Local Plan, Integrated Waste Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children's Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy, Carbon Management Plan, Hereford City Masterplan.

## **Community impact**

13. The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028 has taken into account the key characteristics of Herefordshire, as outlined on Understanding Herefordshire (the council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment). Factors such as rurality, the aging population and social mobility for our young people are key drivers at the heart of the vision, priorities and objectives.
14. Within the community ambition, the approach is focussed on strengthening communities with the aim of connecting people to their local communities; this will be developed over the duration of the plan.

## **Environmental Impact**

15. The Herefordshire Council Plan continues the focus and responsibility to deliver the council's [environmental policy commitments](#) and the following success measures have been included within the plan:
- I. Value nature and uphold environmental standards.
  - II. Minimise pollution and maximise biodiversity.
  - III. Reduce waste, increase reuse and increase recycling.

- IV. Work towards reducing county and council carbon emissions, aiming for net zero carbon by 2030 and work with partners and communities to make the county more resilient to the effects of climate change.
16. Climate change is the greatest challenge of modern times. Herefordshire Council declared the climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and has been working over the long term to reduce the county's and council's carbon footprint. The plan provides an overview of how we will endeavour to meet our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030/31 and work collaboratively to support county wide reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
17. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
18. The development of this project has sought to minimise any adverse environmental impact and will actively seek opportunities to improve and enhance environmental performance.

## **Equality duty**

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. Improving equality of opportunity and access, and reducing inequality underpins the plan. Individual elements of activity and delivery with the plan will complete equality impact assessments as a fundamental element to planning, decision making and implementation of the change.

## **Resource implications**

22. The recommendations of this report have no direct financial implications, however the priorities within the plan set the strategic direction for the council. Proposals from the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028 will be delivered within the budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy as agreed at Council in February.

## **Legal implications**

23. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report. The legal implications of any decisions to be taken by the executive in implementing the Herefordshire Council Plan will be set out within the relevant decision report.

## **Risk management**

24. The Herefordshire Council Plan has integral elements of the council's performance and risk management framework. Risks associated with objectives and projects are entered onto the relevant project, service or directorate risk register and escalated as appropriate. The corporate risk register is a living document and reviewed regularly by Management Board, Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee.
25. The financial challenge and capacity to deliver the corporate priorities, whilst delivering the necessary savings, remains a significant risk; this will be mitigated by ensuring that there is regular oversight and monitoring as detailed in the performance and risk framework.

## **Consultees**

26. The Herefordshire Council Plan has been developed and informed through engagement with partners, stakeholders and residents across the county. Both in person and online events have been held, along with a survey on the council's website.
27. The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the objectives which encapsulate the plan's priorities for the next four years, including what people felt were missing from the ambitions and objectives.
28. The events commenced in December 2023 and were completed at the end of February 2024 and covered over twenty events throughout the county including targeted events for:
  - I. Young people
  - II. People with disabilities
  - III. Environmental groups
  - IV. Low-income families
29. Events for business representatives, the community sector, ward members, parish/town councils and other key stakeholders were also held. These events were delivered in workshop style to explore the top 5 objectives and identify gaps.
30. Participants were also asked to describe the Herefordshire they would like to see in 2028 in three words. Safe, happy and healthy were the words most commonly used by respondents. These are reflected in the objectives above and the vision for the plan.
31. The development of the plan has been reviewed by Scrutiny Management Board Working Group this will be reviewed by Scutiny Management Board.
32. An all member briefing was held in December 2023 and March 2024, the session in March gave the opportunity to review and feedback on the draft plan.

## Appendices

### Appendix A Draft Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028

### Appendix B Summary of key findings from formal consultation

#### Background papers

None identified

#### Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

|                |                     |                 |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Governance     | John Coleman        | Date 26/04/2024 |
| Finance        | Karen Morris        | Date 23/04/2024 |
| Legal          | Georgina Coley      | Date 25/04/2024 |
| Communications | Luenne Featherstone | Date 26/03/2024 |
| Equality Duty  | Harriet Yellin      | Date 25/04/2024 |
| Procurement    | Lee Robertson       | Date 27/03/2024 |
| Risk           | Lee Washbrook       | Date 25/03/2024 |
| Approved by    | Paul Walker         | Date 08/05/2024 |