

## **Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Thursday 18 July 2024 at 2.30 pm**

**Cabinet Members Physically Present and voting:** Councillor Jonathan Lester, Leader of the Council (Chairperson)  
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairperson), Graham Biggs, Harry Bramer, Carole Gandy, Ivan Powell, Philip Price and Pete Stoddart

**Cabinet Members in remote attendance:** None  
*Cabinet members attending the meeting remotely, e.g. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.*

Cabinet support members in attendance: None

Group leaders / representatives in attendance: Councillors Clare Davies, Liz Harvey, Terry James and Stef Simmons (as representative for Ellie Chowns).

Scrutiny chairpersons in attendance: None

Other councillors in attendance: None

Officers in attendance: R Cook, H Hall, L Featherstone, J Burgess, K Morris, S O'Connor, T Russell, R Sanders, P Walker, D Webb and Samantha Walmsley (clerk)

### **10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Councillors Chowns, Crockett, Durkin, Fagan, Hurcomb, Mason, Proctor and Stark.

### **11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **12. MINUTES**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 will be considered at the next Cabinet meeting.**

### **13. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 5 - 6)**

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

### **14. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No Councillor questions were received.

### **15. REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

There were no reports from scrutiny committees for consideration at this meeting.

### **16. ADDITION OF CAPITAL BUDGET TO PROVIDE AN ACQUISITION FUND FOR HOUSING PROVISION**

The cabinet for finance and corporate services introduced the report. It seeks approval of an additional £5m budget to the capital programme to enable delivering of housing provision. This administrations housing strategy will be delivered in Autumn and will provide an element

of affordable housing. It is clearly aligned with the Place theme in the Council Plan, to support the right housing in the right place and as per the objective set out under the Growth scheme in the Delivery Plan, to secure accommodation for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness. It also supports the Homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy 2025 which is aligned with central government policy in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It was noted that these statutory obligations impose a resource and financial burden on Herefordshire Council that has increased by almost 100% over the last two years in 2023/24. It was confirmed that Housing Solutions spent £3,415,832.27 on temporary accommodation. The current units available to accommodate homelessness were set out and it was noted that this £5m will establish a fund to enable Herefordshire Council to respond to opportunities to acquire and develop further housing provision to meet demand and decrease costs spent on temporary accommodation.

The capital programme was approved by full Council in February 2024 and this report now proposes an in-year change to the approved programme. The additional £5m to the capital programme is to enable Cabinet to take decisions when properties or land become available. The £5m is added on the basis that any rental income will cover the running costs and provide a surplus to repay the cost of borrowing. Homes England Grants will also be applied, as applicable, to reduce the overall borrowing costs and be added to the capital programme by the s.151 delegated powers.

It was emphasised that inclusion in the capital programme is not approval to proceed. Each project will be subject to its own governance and a full business case will be presented, and in full compliance with contract procedural rules. The aim of capital expenditure is to benefit the community through improved facilities and promoting economic growth. It was confirmed that any project within the Delivery Plan will seek to minimise any adverse environmental impact. It was further stated that the addition of £5m to the capital programme is on the basis that any borrowing requirement will be funded from surplus income and there are no financial implications for the revenue budget.

Cabinet members discussed the report, it was noted that the report provides a degree of nimbleness to respond to need. It was confirmed that it is not an agreement to spend but to look at opportunities as they become available. It was further noted that during Covid there was a period of time when the Council were seeking to make similar acquisitions but the Council were not able to do so due to constraints and therefore this report was welcomed.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The report was welcomed and supported by all groups to provide affordable housing. It was noted that homelessness crisis was huge in the County, demand was increasing and noted since the closure of the shelter there was a gap in provision. However it was highlighted that there was more to do and progress needs to be made.

In response to the queries it was noted that we are leaning into inequality and other things are happening alongside this. Notably, a tender is in progress for the best practice approach to affordable housing which will also go to Scrutiny. A working group will also be put together once the best practice report is in place and this report has been approved.

**It was unanimously resolved that:**

**a) To approve the addition of £5m to the capital programme for housing provision.**

**17. HEREFORDSHIRE ALL AGE CARERS STRATEGY 2024-2029**

The cabinet member for adults, health and wellbeing introduced the report and highlighted that in September 2023 work began to review and update the unpaid carers

strategy. In 2021 census identified just under 17,000 unpaid carers across Herefordshire but the actual number is likely greater. A working group was formed in September with membership from a wide range of groups and organisations that support carers as well as individuals with lived experiences. Between October and May there has been series of engagement events and all member briefing was held.

It was noted that the All Age Carer Strategy identified 6 areas to focus (1) value and recognition, (2) young carers, (3) assessment and support, (4) technology enabled care, (5) staying healthy, (6) information and resources.

In May 2024 a coproduction event took place and the priorities were discussed by attendees and feedback was provided which was incorporated into the final version of the strategy. The vision strategy was also agreed as 'Herefordshire is a carer friendly County where carers of all ages are recognised, valued, heard and enabled to live a healthy fulfilling family life'.

There were comments from Cabinet members. The reference to young carers and young adult carers was welcomed and noted it provides a good opportunity to better understand all caring that is delivered. Also, to ensure young carers are able to engage with education and it provides the opportunity to have conversations with primary schools. It was noted that young carers face challenges and an Early Help officer in the Council had queried how young carers could be supported with free bus travel for shopping, attending health appointments and accessing young carers groups. Also, how young carers could be supported to engage in activities. It was queried how young carers will be supported in practice in the context of the strategy overall. It was confirmed that an action to deliver this strategy is being put in place and its objectives are being drafted, this will form the work plan for the partnership board which will be established once the strategy is approved. It was recognised that young carers face particular challenges and specific actions will be incorporated to support them based on the feedback received during the strategy consultation. It was confirmed that this will include admission to various venues and transport concessions. It was raised by the Leader if a child friendly document of this strategy would be produced for young carers and it was confirmed a more child friendly document would be provided.

Group leaders gave the views of their groups. The delivery of this strategy was welcomed and the fact it is an all age carers strategy was positive, particularly that the strategy identified the impact on young carers. It was noted that the holistic approach to families was welcomed and the need for targeted support through the Early Help service. It was noted that the Carers Partnership Board will hopefully assist in coordination.

Concern was raised regarding the strategy's implementation and financial support, alongside ensuring engagement with the voluntary sector, health care and ICB. It was noted there has been a reduction in the support available for young carers in market towns. It was queried how navigation of the DWP system for carers will be supported and concern was raised regarding the number of disabled carers and whether they were receiving the correct support. It was also raised what the availability, affordability and support for new technology will look like. It was raised that a map showing voluntary support group locations alongside the locations of unpaid carers would be beneficial to understand how well connected the support for carers was in the County. It was noted that monitoring of the annual work plan was required to ensure key actions are implemented and additional input from Health and Wellbeing and Children Scrutiny committees would be welcomed. Respite was queried for the carer and who would replace the unpaid carer.

In response to the queries it was noted that the DWP will be looked into and there are adult advanced practitioners from the Adult Safeguarding Chairs network whose regional representative could be contacted to assist with the DWP.

Regarding the map, it was confirmed there is information about the voluntary sector organisations known but acknowledged there may be more groups. It was confirmed that this will be looked at and also engage with Talk Community to help provide information about the communities they are working in.

In respect of respite, where the care assessment is conducted respite is included within this.

Scrutiny committees' engagement will be welcomed, it was noted that scrutiny engagement on the action plan would be more useful and requested the statutory scrutiny officer refer this to the scrutiny committees.

**It was unanimously resolved that:**

- a) Approves the Herefordshire All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2029**
- b) Delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People to take all operational decisions, as set out within this report and appendices, that fall within the responsibility of Herefordshire Council.**

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

**Chairperson**

**Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the public**

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1	Peter McKay, Leominster	As a Parish Footpath Officer would you reconsider the proposed diversion D548 of footpath ZC22 across Morrisons carpark, both Morrisons Agent and Town Council suggesting it be diverted to the service road pavement. Concern with present proposal is that part remains obstructed being across parking spaces and through recycling centre with no information what is proposed for that part. Diverting the path off the carpark and to the service road pavement would enable service road to be crossed at a safer location away from the bend, and present unrecorded walked route that is out of sight and suffers abuse to be stopped up. Having discussed with PROW they indicate they cannot discuss matters outside of the proposed diversion, dealing with any remaining issues once diversion had been undertaken, yet that may require another diversion?	Cllr Price
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p><i>The council are in the process of reviewing with an alternative unobstructed option being prepared. The suggested route, using the service road by the garage, is already part of the public highway network. Once the review has been completed, the proposed route will be shared with the Town Council for comment prior to the formal consultation and before any changes are implemented.</i></p>			
<p><b>Confirmed no supplementary question</b></p>			
PQ 2	Jeremy Milln, Hereford	<p>Having in mind the lack of provision for those who cannot afford motor transport and would therefore walk or cycle I asked a public question of General Scrutiny on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 concerning the failure of the designs for the Southern Link Road to comply with section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 due to its disproportionately adverse impact on the less advantaged. I was assured the issue would be addressed.</p> <p>It wasn't but I see a design review is to be included in the County Delivery Plan 2024-28. Can I have the cabinet member's assurance that if the scheme is to go ahead it will be compliant for LTN1/20 segregated active travel infrastructure so that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act for what, in truth, would be more an distributor road for housing development than a 'bypass'?</p>	Cllr Price
<p><b>Response:</b></p>			

*A design review of the current proposals for the Southern Link Road will be carried out as part of the next stage of developing the scheme. The link road forms the first phase of the council's commitment to delivering the Hereford Western Bypass to support the growth and prosperity of the city.*

*One of the benefits of the bypass is a significant reduction in levels of traffic in the city, which will create the conditions for improving facilities for pedestrians, cyclist and public transport users. The council is currently developing a Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan which will assist in determining where the most effective interventions might be considered.*

*The scheme review will include an update of the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that impacts on people with protected characteristics are mitigated. Where new facilities are considered, the requirements of LTN1/20 will be incorporated wherever possible and where site constraints allow.*

**Supplementary question:**

The Cabinet Member's response fails to answer the question which was specifically about equality of access to the Southern Link Road, not about mitigating the effects of City traffic which would worsen anyway due to induced demand which was acknowledged in Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

It is a perfectly simple question and tiresome to have to use my supplementary to repeat it.

- The SLR being designed for motorists alone was rated 'severe adverse' for equality as Herefordshire Council would be failing under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 requiring a Public Body to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. Therefore if the SLR goes ahead will the Cabinet Member seek to ensure it gets LTN1/20 compliant segregated active travel infrastructure so that the less advantaged members of our society who may otherwise need to walk or cycle, are not excluded? Yes or no?

**Supplementary response:**

Thank you Mr Milln for your question, did seek to answer the question as your originally put it and I refer to my original response, the next stage of the development of the Southern Link Road will include a design review and an update of the Equality Impact Assessment. It would be inappropriate for me to pre-empt the outcome of that review.